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ESSAYS  
IN  
LITERARY CRITICISM.

BY  
RICHARD HOLT HUTTON.

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*GOETHE AND HIS INFLUENCE.—NATHANIEL HAW-  
THORNE.—ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.—WORDS-  
WORTH AND HIS GENIUS.—GEORGE  
ELIOT.—MATTHEW ARNOLD.*

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## PREFACE.

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IN offering these Essays to an American public, I am very sensible that the only value they are likely to have will arise not from any special literary ability or insight of mine, but solely from the constant delight which I have taken in the writers here reviewed,—who have indeed lived with me and in me, till their world has become a genuine part of my own by no means too rich intellectual life. It is in this way, I cannot help thinking,—by soaking themselves thoroughly with a few great writers, instead of spreading their interests so widely as most literary men do,—that educated men of only ordinary capacities such as mine may do most for the service of literature and the culture of their own minds. It is but few who in any age can really aspire to the position of great critics,—critics such as Coleridge, or Hazlitt, or Lamb, or Lowell, or Emerson. But many, by a more intense concentration of their inferior intellectual powers, might become both good interpreters and, to a certain extent, just critics of a few great authors,—of such authors, I mean, as, while far above

them in power and genius, are yet of the type which they can, in the literal sense of the word, "understand,"—*i. e.*, so stand beneath as to get a good view, though one from a lower point, both of their powers and their defects. For I do not hold that a man who is really familiar with a great author, however much his superior in genius and imaginative power, need be in any way blind to that author's defects. It is a pure affectation to pretend that in studying true genius inferior capacity should always distrust its own judgments simply because they are unfavourable. The creative imagination of genius is by no means necessarily so capable of judging its own productions as the imagination of those who heartily enjoy without having any power to rival them. If I am not competent to affirm without a doubt that it was an excrable and most undramatic conceit in Shakespeare, to make Laertes dry his tears over his drowned sister with the wretched effort at jocularity contained in the line,—

"Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia!"

I do not suppose I am competent to understand the tragic character of Ophelia's fate at all. If I cannot discern the unmanly element in Goethe's sentimental correspondence with the various ladies with whom he was or thought himself in love, and the rubbishy ambitiousness, if I may be excused the expression, of his delineation of the ideal State in Wilhelm Meister's "Wanderjahre," I am quite sure that there must be



something radically misleading in the lessons of criticism which he himself has taught me in the crisp epigrams of his conversations with Eckermann, the delicate art-comments of the "Italienische Reise," and the fine commentary on "Hamlet" which is contained in the "Lehrjahre" of Wilhelm Meister. If I am not competent to assert that Wordsworth was unworthy of himself when he indulged in such dreary platitudes about his "moral being" as now and then interrupt the flow of his noblest strains of meditation, or when he falls into the false simplicity of his addresses to "my little Bess" in "Peter Bell," or "dear brother Jim" in "We are Seven," I am quite sure that I cannot have entered aright into that "lonely rapture of lonely minds," which Wordsworth, of all the poets that ever lived, knew best how to excite. It is folly to suppose that because a critic stands far beneath the author he tries to interpret, he must therefore be passing his true limits directly he *as soon* begins to note deficiencies. *as* It is the characteristic of all great authors to teach those who saturate themselves with their works, where those works fall beneath the standard which they themselves have set up. This much I say just to indicate that I do not think the inferior scale of any man's critical powers an adequate justification for the affection of literary idolatry. If any one has lived enough in a great writer to know what that writer can do which no one else can do, he has lived long enough with him to know

when he goes out of his true province, and does badly what much inferior men might do well.

I would only add that there seems to me to be a certain unity in the subjects of the Essays which my American publisher has selected for republication in the United States. They are all at least concerned with writers whose intellectual self-consciousness is so great that, to some extent, it limits their creative genius. This, indeed, has been true of most of the greatest English and American writers of this generation, and it is to Goethe that most of them owe their intellectual parentage in this respect. That deeply-rooted habit of Goethe's of watching the processes and workings of his own mind when he was drawn toward any object of attraction, or repelled from any object of aversion, cannot, indeed, be credited with any responsibility for the meditative joy which gives all its specific character to the poetry of Wordsworth, for Wordsworth was singularly uninfluenced by any genius but his own. But Wordsworth's genius, too, was certainly limited by its self-consciousness in a different way. He owes to it all his greatest poems, and also all the worst defects of his greatest poems. Nor can he pass out of the region of self-consciousness into the naturalism of Scott, or the realism of Crabbe, or the lyric passion of Shelley. It was his delight to detect the analogies between the workings of the elements of Nature, and the workings of the thought and feeling in his own heart. He was always

on the watch for the approach of the moment when his nature was flooded from a source above itself by a tide of feeling which yet somehow connected the physical world with the spiritual and which appeared to testify to the identity of the two. But the self-consciousness which was his strength was also his weakness. And when he mistook, as he often did, his own individual dogmatism for the tide of a divine emotion, he became simply maudlin, egotistic, and tedious. The same self-consciousness, though in a very different form, pervades the other writers I have here criticised, and marks the limit of their power. It is the inquisitive irony which arises from this self-consciousness that gives all its peculiar flavour to the poetry of Arnold and Clough, and to the fiction of George Eliot; and though Hawthorne's inquisitive scrutiny into life is combined with a mysticism which I suppose to be of different origin, it introduces the same ambiguous tone into his reflections, and gives to his countenance, in my fancy at least, even a more clearly pronounced sardonic smile. None of these great authors, Wordsworth included, could have written in any age of the world in which men had not begun to question themselves as to the worth of their own feelings and thoughts, though it was Wordsworth's task in life to find a triumphant answer to the question, and to give evidence of moods of feeling pervaded by the highest tides of the universal goodness and the universal love. Thus, a pervading

self-consciousness limits all the writers dealt with in these Essays as well as gives them their peculiar power. And though I believe that even the most sceptical of these great writers—even George Eliot and Matthew Arnold—really doubt the value of their own scepticism quite as much as they doubt the faiths which it undermines, and though Hawthorne leaves on me the most abiding impression that the solitary mood of mind to which he owed his peculiar genius,—the mood which peered so curiously into those human impulses which he only half shared,—yet gave him glimpses of the action of transcendental forces in human affairs such as would confute the materialist and confound the narrow wisdom of secular prudence, I see clearly that one and all of them are painfully sensible of the imaginative paralysis which doubt brings with it. For myself I heartily believe that when the great wave of self-questioning impulse which has unsettled our religious beliefs has spent its force, we shall find that it has not carried away, but established that divine creed which it will certainly have transformed and transfigured ;—nevertheless, in the meantime, it is clear that a great literary school will have been produced by that self-questioning spirit, and a school whose members have endured much more of the pain of puzzling over the enigma of life, than of the joy of solving it, though in Wordsworth they most of them found, and all of them might have found, some of that light which comes only in the most exalted mo-

ments of self-knowledge, but which then assures us that, at bottom, the conscience of man is the key to the science of the universe, and not the science of the universe the key to the conscience of man.

There is one other common characteristic of all these writers, and it is one, I think, which especially recommends them to the literary world of the United States. They are all great masters of style,—of a lucid and simple style. It has often puzzled me to understand why the style of the greater American authors is so simple and lucid,—has so little in it of the full-mouthed rhetoric of democratic pride or even of the old visionary, republican idealism. But whatever be the cause, it is quite obvious that the greater writers of the United States have produced much less that resembles the glowing imagery of Bunyan, and the magnificent, not to say magniloquent, declamation of Milton, than of literature which reminds us of the polished grace of Addison or of the realistic humour of Goldsmith. Perhaps complete sincerity and simplicity of style is more strictly natural to the intellectual culture of a Republic than to the intellectual culture of societies as complex as those of Europe. Be that as it may, I am sure that the few essays here contained are studies of authors whose style is at least as great a charm to the culture of the United States as it is to the culture of England.

ENGLEFIELD GREEN, STAINES,

28th August, 1876.





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## I.

# GOETHE AND HIS INFLUENCE.<sup>1</sup>

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GOETHE tells us in his Autobiography, that while his mind was wandering about in search of a religious system, and thus passing over the intermediate areas between the various regions of theological belief, he met with a certain phenomenon which seemed to him to belong to none of them, and which he used to call therefore *dæmonic* influence. "It was not divine, for it seemed unintellectual; nor human, for it was no result of understanding; nor diabolic, for it was of beneficent tendency; nor angelic, for you could

<sup>1</sup> "The Life and Works of Goethe: with Sketches of his Age and Contemporaries, from published and unpublished sources." By G. H. Lewes. 2 vols. Nutt, 1855.

"Freundschaftliche Briefe von Goethe und seiner Frau an Nicolaus Meyer, aus den Jahren 1800-1831." Leipzig, Hartung, 1856. ("Friendly Letters from Goethe and his Wife to Nicolas Meyer, between the years 1800 and 1831." Leipzig, 1856.)

often notice in it a certain mischievousness. It resembled chance, inasmuch as it demonstrated nothing; but was like providence, inasmuch as it showed symptoms of continuity. Everything which fetters human agency seemed to yield before it; it seemed to dispose arbitrarily of the necessary elements of our existence." It is not always, says this great observer of life, "the first and best, either in moral nature or in abilities," who possess this magnetic influence, and it is but rarely "that they recommend themselves by goodness of heart; but a gigantic force goes out of them, and they exercise an incredible power over all creatures, nay, even over the elements themselves; and who can say how far this influence may reach? All *moral* forces united are powerless against them. The masses are fascinated by them. They are only to be conquered by the universe itself," when they enter into conflict with it. Of course Goethe was thinking mainly of Napoleon, and men like him, as he afterwards told Eckermann, when he wrote this passage. Such men put forth, he says, a power, "if not exactly *opposite* to, yet at least *crossing*, that of the general moral order of the world; so that the one might be regarded as the woof, the other as the warp." He adds, that his life-long friend and patron, the Duke of Weimar, had this magnetic influence to such a degree that nobody could resist him, and no work of art ever failed in the poet's hands which the duke had suggested or approved. "He would have been enviable indeed if he could have possessed himself of my ideas and higher strivings;

for when the *dæmon* forsook him, and only the human was left, he knew not how to set to work, and was much troubled at it. In Byron this element was probably very active, giving him such powers of fascination, especially with women." Eckermann, with his usual delightfully child-like simplicity, anxiously asks, "Has not Mephistopheles traits of this nature?" "No," replies Goethe, "Mephistopheles is too negative a being. The *dæmonic* manifests itself in positive active power among artists. It is found often in musicians, more rarely among painters. In Paganini it shows itself to a high degree, and it is by means of it that he produces such great effects." Of himself he says, "it does not lie in my nature, but I am subject to its influence;" by which Goethe probably meant modestly to disclaim having any personal fascination of this kind over other men, but to indicate, what we know from other conversations he really held to be true, that apparently arbitrary and quite inexplicable impulses had often exercised the most decisive and frequently fortunate influence on his own career. But it is quite clear that Goethe did possess in no common degree this faculty for, in a certain sense, fascinating men by his presence, as well as by his writings. If Byron had more of it as a man, Goethe succeeded in imparting far more of it to his works, and neither his life nor works can be properly judged without reference to its influence. It is something quite distinct from mere beauty, power, or general merit, either of personal character or of literary creation. It is a power which goes out from the individual man, and which

can imprint itself only on such writings as carry with them the stamp of individual character; and not always even on those, if, as for example in the case of Byron's earlier works, the play of character is a good deal merged in some exaggerated mood of sentiment. It is not intensity: numbers of writers have surpassed Goethe in the intensity both of literary and personal characteristics. Schiller was a man of far keener and intenser, though narrower nature, and yet he could not help going into utter captivity to the calm and somewhat limply-constituted mind of his Weimar friend. It is not even in itself independence or strength of will; for though Goethe had this in a remarkable degree, many others, as probably Schiller, had possessed it in as high a degree, who were quite destitute of his fascinating talent. If it be expressible in one phrase at all (which it is not), it might be called *presence of mind in combination with a keen knowledge of men*. I mean that absolute and complete adequacy to every emergency which gave Napoleon his *sang-froid* at the very turning-point of his great battles, and which in the literary world has secured for Johnson his Boswell, and for Goethe his Eckermann. Johnson, indeed, was immeasurably Goethe's inferior in the range of his experience, and, what is of more importance, in his knowledge of man; but he was perhaps his superior in mere presence of mind, and hence was greater in conversation, but less in fascination. The Duke of Wellington had nearly as much presence of mind as Napoleon himself; but he had immeasurably less of the other element of fascination



—instinctive knowledge of men, and knowledge how to use them.

Goethe is almost unrivalled in the literary world in the degree in which he combines these qualities. Shakespeare may have had them equally, but his dramas are too impersonal to tell us clearly what kind of individual influence he put forth. I should conjecture that his sympathy with men was too vivid to have enabled him to keep, as was the case with Goethe, a part of himself as a permanent reserve-force outside the actual field of action, and ready to turn the flank of any new emergency. Shakespeare can scarcely have been so uniformly able to *detach* himself, if he would, from the sympathies and passions of the moment as Goethe certainly was; for Goethe, like the little three-eyed girl (*Dreiäuglein*) in the German tale, had always an extra organ besides the eyes he slept and wept with, to take note of his own sleep and his own tears, and an extra will, subject to the command of the third eye, ready to rescue the ordinary will from the intricacies of human emotion. Shakespeare's knowledge of life was, I should think, less drawn from constant vigilance and presence of mind in the passing moment (to which I imagine him to have abandoned himself far more completely than Goethe), and more from the power of memory and imagination to reproduce those sympathies again. However this may be, Shakespeare has himself sketched, less perhaps this cool presence of mind itself, than the effect which it produces on other men, in his picture of Octavius Cæsar. Cæsar's cool self-

possessed eye for every emergency, and for the right use of human instruments, and its paralyzing effect on Antony's more attaching and passionate power of character, is a striking example of what Goethe would have called the "dæmonic" element in human affairs—the element that fascinates men by at once standing out clear and quite independent of their support, and yet indicating the power to read them off and detect for them their own needs and uses. There is always in this kind of magnetic power something repulsive at first; but if the repulsion be overcome, the attraction becomes stronger than ever; there is a resistance while the mind of the disciple is striving to keep its independence and conscious of the spell,—an intense devotion after he has once relinquished it, and consented to be satellite. So the soothsayer tells Antony,—

“Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is  
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,  
Where Cæsar's is not; but near him, thy angel  
Becomes a fear, as being overpowered; therefore  
Make space enough between you.”

And Goethe, who had, as he says, himself experienced the force of this blind fascination in the Duke of Weimar's influence over him, as well as wielded it in no slight degree, tells Eckermann (himself a captive), “The higher a man stands, the more he is liable to this dæmonic influence; and he must take constant care that his guiding will be not diverted by it from the straight way. . . . This is just the difficult point,—for our better nature stoutly to sustain itself, and yield to the dæmonic no more than is reasonable.”

In Goethe himself this fascinating power existed as strongly as it is well possible to conceive in a man whose whole intellectual nature was of the sympathetic and contemplative, rather than of the practical cast,—who had no occasion to “use” men except as literary material,—and who, while he stood out independent of them, and could at will shake off from his feet the dust of long association, yet felt *with* them as one who understood their nature and had entered into their experience. Goethe’s sympathetic and genial insight into man would have been a pure embarrassment to a practical cold-tempered tool-seeker like Napoleon, who never deciphered men through sympathy, but always by an instinctive tact for detecting masterly and workmanlike instruments. And *vice versa*, the imperturbable self-possession and Napoleonic *sang-froid* of judgment that underlay in Goethe all storms of superficial emotion, was no little embarrassment to him in many of his literary moods. It prevented him, we think, from ever becoming a great dramatist. He could never lose himself sufficiently in his creations: yet it was emphatically this which gave that peculiar and undefinable fascination to those minutely-accurate observations on life with which all his later prose works and his conversations are so thickly stocked. You can clearly see that men of strong nature did not submit to Goethe’s magnetic influence without a struggle. Schiller, at first intensely repelled from him, was only gradually subdued, though thoroughly and strangely magnetized into idolatry by personal converse. Herder’s keen

and caustic nature vibrated to the end between the intense repulsion he felt for Goethe's completely *unmoral* genius,—the poet's impartial sympathy for good and evil alike,—and the irresistible attraction which his personal influence exerted. Only those could thoroughly cling to Goethe from the first who were not conscious of having any strong intellectual independence to maintain. Women, who love nothing so much as a completely independent self-sustained nature, especially if joined with thorough insight into themselves, were purely fascinated at once. Wieland, who had no intellectual ground to fight for, surrendered without terms. But no man of eminent ability and a different school of thought seemed to approach him without some sense that, if exposed constantly to his immediate influence, he had to choose between fascination and aversion. Hence his *very* few intimate male friends: scarcely any man at all able to enter into his mind and share his deeper interests was likely to be found who could go so completely into captivity to his modes of thought; and, tolerant as he was, the centrifugal force of his mind threw off, to a certain respectful distance, all that the attractive force was not able to appropriate as part of itself. There has been a very similar effect produced by his writings on those even who did not know the man. Novalis fluttered round them, repeatedly expressing his aversion, like a moth round a candle. They invariably repel, at first, English readers with English views of life and duty. As you read more and more, and the characteristic atmosphere of the man distils into your

life, you find the magnetic force coming strongly over you; you are as a man mesmerized; you feel his calm independence of so much on which you helplessly lean, combined with his thorough insight into that desire of yours to lean, drawing you irresistibly towards the invisible intellectual centre at which such independent strength and such genial breadth of thought was possible. And yet you feel that you would be in many and various ways lowered in your own eyes if you could think completely as he thought and act as he acted. It becomes a difficult problem, in the presence of so much genius, and beneath so fascinating an eye, "for our better nature stoutly to sustain itself and yield to the dæmonic no more than is reasonable."

Let me attempt to contribute to the solution of this difficulty by some account and criticism of Goethe's life and genius in connection with that personal character which so subtly penetrates all he has written. Carlyle mistook completely when he said that Goethe, like Shakespeare, leaves little trace of himself in his creations. To a fine eye this is not even true of Shakespeare, though Shakespeare leaves no *immediate* stamp of himself, and critical inference alone can discern him in his works; but far less is it true of Goethe. A rarefied self no doubt it is—a highly distilled gaseous essence; but everywhere, penetrating all he writes, there is the ethereal atmosphere which travelled about with Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

Mr. Lewes's volume gives us a very able and interesting biography,—a book, indeed, of permanent

value ; the incidents illustrating character, though not quite exhausting his materials, are disposed with skill, and the artistic criticism, while thoroughly appreciating Goethe's transcendent political genius, is independent, sensible, and English. From his moral criticism of Goethe, and sometimes, though not so frequently, from the poetical, I very widely dissent, and hope to give the grounds of my dissent. Something more too might have been done in the way of defining his individual position both as a poet and as a man. But it is impossible to deny Mr. Lewes high merit for the candour of his biography. Where Goethe has been most censured, he gives all the facts without reserve ; and he does not go into any helpless captivity to the poet and artist. He gives his readers the elements for forming their own moral judgments, and he has shaken off from his feet the ponderous rubbish of the German scholiasts. Herr Düntzer and his colleagues are skilfully used in Mr. Lewes's book ; but they are also skilfully ignored. Mr. Lewes has not submitted himself to Carlyle's somewhat indiscriminating, strained, and lashed-up furor of adoration for every word that the German sage let drop. There is, by the way, nothing more remarkably illustrative of Goethe's "dæmonic" influence than Carlyle's worship of him. Except in his permanent unfailing self-possession, Goethe lacked almost all the personal qualities which usually fascinate that great writer's eye. And accordingly there runs through the essays on Goethe a tone of arduous admiration,—a helpless desire to fix on some characteristic which he could



infinitely admire,—betraying that he was in subjection to the “eyes behind the book,” not to the thing which is said in it. There was nothing of the rugged thrusting power of Johnson, of the imperious practical faith of Cromwell, of the picturesque passion of Danton, the kingly fanaticism of Mahomet; nothing, in short, of the intensity of nature which Carlyle always needs behind the sagacity he worships. Mr. Lewes reports a rather affected piece of Carlylese, delivered by the Latter-day oracle in Piccadilly upon one of the injurious attacks that had been directed against Goethe. Carlyle stopped suddenly, and with his peculiar look and emphasis said, “Yes, it is the wild cry of amazement on the part of all spooneys that the Titan was not a spoony too! Here is a godlike intellect, and yet you see he is not an idiot! not in the least a spoony!” This was hardly true of Goethe; and we strongly suspect that Mr. Carlyle was resisting a secret feeling that there was a limpness and want of concentration in Goethe’s whole nature intellectual and moral, from the results of which his imperturbable presence of mind and great genius barely saved him; that he did in consequence go sometimes beyond the brink of spooneyishness in early days, and across the verge of very unreal “high art” in later life. These are just the defects to which Mr. Carlyle is most sensitive. It is true Goethe never was in danger of permanently sinking into either abyss; for his head was always cool, and his third eye, at least, always vigilant. But it may perhaps account for the unusual failure of our great essayist in delineating Goethe, that the poet’s

wonderful writings were less the real object of his admiration than the strange fascination of the character behind. In my very brief sketch of the poet's life, I shall, so far as possible, select my illustrations from passages or incidents passed over in Mr. Lewes's volumes, wherever they seem to be equally characteristic.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, born at noon on the 28th August, 1749, in Frankfort-on-the-Maine, seems to have inherited his genial, sensitive, sensuous, and joyous temperament from his mother; and from his father, the pride, self-dependence, and magnificent formality, the nervous orderliness, perseverance, and the microscopic minuteness of eye, by which, at least after the first rush of youth was gone by, he was always distinguished. His mother was but eighteen when he was born. She was a lively girl, full of German sentiment, with warm impulses, by no means much troubled with a conscience, exceedingly afraid of her husband, who was near twenty years her senior, and seemingly both willing and skilful in the invention of occasional white lies adapted to screen her children from his minute, fidgetty, and rather austere superintendence. She "spoiled" her children on principle, and made no pretence of conducting a systematic training which she abhorred. She said of herself in after-years, that she could "educate no child, was quite unfit for it, gave them every wish so long as they laughed and were good, and whipped them if they cried or made wry mouths, without ever looking

for any reason why they laughed or cried.”<sup>2</sup> Her belief in Providence was warm with German sentiment, and not a little tinged with superstition. She rejoiced greatly when her son published the “Confessions of a Beautiful Soul,” which she loved as a memorial of a lost pietistic friend. Her religion was one of emotion rather than of moral reverence. She was generous and extravagant, and, after her husband’s death, seems to have spent capital as well as income. She was passionately fond of the theatre; a taste which she transmitted to her son. Her hearty simplicity of nature made her universally loved. Her servants loved and stayed with her to the last. She seems to have had at least as much humour as her son, which, for Germans, was not inconsiderable, and not much more sense of awe. She gave the most detailed orders for her own funeral, and even specified the kind of wine and the size of the cracknels with which the mourners were to be regaled; ordering the servants not to put too few raisins into the cakes, as she never could endure that in her life, and it would certainly chafe her in her grave. Having been invited to go to a party on the day on which she died, she sent for answer that “Madame Goethe could not come, as she was engaged just then in dying.”<sup>3</sup> Yet her sensitiveness was so great, that she always made it a condition with her servants that they should never repeat to her painful news that they had picked up

<sup>2</sup> Letter to her granddaughter—Düntzer’s “Frauenbilder,” p. 544.

<sup>3</sup> Düntzer’s “Frauenbilder,” p. 583.

accidentally, as she wished to hear nothing sad without absolute necessity. And during her son's dangerous illness at Weimar, in 1805, no one ventured to speak to her of it till it was past, though she affirmed that she had been conscious all the time of his danger without the heart to mention it. This peculiarity Goethe inherited. Courageous to the utmost degree in all physical danger, he could never bear to encounter mental pain which he could anyhow escape. He invented soft paraphrases to avoid speaking of the death of those he had loved, and indeed of all death. Writing to Zelter of his own son's death, he says, "the staying-away (*Aeussenbleiben*) of my son has weighed dreadfully upon me in many ways." And his feeling was so well known, that his old friend and mistress, the Frau von Stein, who died before him, directed that her funeral should not pass his door, lest it should impress him too painfully. No one dared to tell him of Schiller's death; and so it was also at the death of his wife's sister, and in other cases. Indeed, his constant unwillingness manfully to face the secret of his own anguish, was a principal source of a shade of unreality in a generally very real character. He habitually evaded the task of fathoming the meaning and the depth of suffering. He avoided all contact with keen pain. He could not bear, although in the neighbourhood, to visit his brother-in-law at a time when his sister's child was dying. It was not weakness,—it was his principle of action; and the effect remains in his works. He writes like a man who had not only experienced but explored every reality of human life

except that of anguish and remorse. The iron that enters into the soul had found him too; but instead of fronting it as he fronted all other realities of life, and pondering its teaching to the last letter, he drew back from it with what speed he might. *This* experience even his Faust wants. Remorse, grief, agony, Goethe gently waived; and, by averting his thoughts, softened them gradually without exhausting their lesson. Hence his passion never reaches the deepest deep of human life. It can glow and melt, but is never a consuming fire. His Werther, Tasso, Ottilie, and Clärchen, suffer keenly, but never *meet* the knife-edge. There is nothing in his poems like the courageous reality of suffering which vibrates through some of Shelley's lyrics and his "Cenci." The fascination of pain he can paint, but not the conquest of the will over its deeper aspect of *terror*. The temperament he inherited from his mother. But to him was granted a conspicuously despotic will, which should have enabled him to sound this depth also.

From his father it is far more difficult to say what qualities of mind Goethe inherited. The old man had always worried his family; and it became fashionable among the poet's friends, who were enthusiastic about his mother, to ignore and depreciate the old counselor, and they seem to have regarded it as a "mercy" when "Providence removed him." There are, however, one or two incidents in the Autobiography which convey an impression that his affection for his children was as real and deep as even that of his wife. He was a formal man, with strong ideas of straight-laced

education, passionately orderly (he thought a good book nothing without a good binding), and never so much excited as by a necessary deviation from the "pre-established harmony" of household rules. He could not submit to the inevitable. He was the kind of man who is so attached to his rules, that if he cannot shatter the obstacles of circumstance, he thinks it next best to let the obstacles of circumstance shatter him. He had none of his son's calm presence of mind. But whatever perseverance of temper Goethe had, he probably gained from his father. He could not bear to do anything superficially. He was as thorough (*gründlich*, as the Germans say) in preparing Wolfgang for the coronation of the emperor by an exhaustive investigation into the authorities for every ceremony to be observed, as in teaching him the civil law. *Einleitung*, *Quellen*, &c., were all raked carefully up; for was not the coronation a part of the "Entwicklung der Geschichte"? He had the formal notions about everything, considered rhyme the essence of poetry, and believed that pictures, like wine, improved in value by mere keeping. He taught his children himself, and completely alienated his daughter by his dry and exacting manner. But he was at least in earnest with his task. He began to learn both English and drawing at the same time with his children, that his own participation in their efforts might spur them on. He copied all his children's drawing-copies "with an English lead-pencil upon the finest Dutch paper; and not only observed the greatest clearness of outline, but most accurately imitated

the hatching of the copies with a light hand. He drew the whole collection, number by number, while we children jumped from one head to another just as we pleased." This is very characteristic of his son's genius in later years, at least in the microscopic detail. After the first outburst of the poet's youthful passion, the lad took a sudden fancy for rude fragmentary drawings from nature, on all sorts of odd gray scraps of paper. And of this time he tells us, "the pedagogism of my father, on this point too, was greatly to be admired. He kindly asked for my attempts, and drew lines around every imperfect sketch. . . . The irregular leaves he cut straight, and thus made the beginning of a collection in which he wished at some future time to rejoice in the progress of his son." There seems to me real tenderness here. He was a proud man, who had drawn back into himself at the first repulse, from civic politics; and was hardly reconciled to his son's adhesion to the Weimar Court, because he dreaded lest some ducal caprice should bring mortification to his family pride.

The poet was born, as he himself records, with that sedate kind of humour in which alone he excelled, with a "propitious horoscope." There was clear anticipation in it of the special worship of young ladies, and of a general sceptre over earth and air. "The sun stood in the sign of the Virgin, and was culminating for the day." Jupiter and Venus were friendly; (little Pallas, undiscovered for another half century, must surely have lent a helping ray); Mercury was not adverse; Mars and Saturn indifferent; "the moon

alone, just full, exerted the power of her opposition, all the more as she had reached her planetary hour; she therefore resisted my birth, which could not be accomplished till this hour was passed."

Frankfort was a busy old-fashioned town, with old walls and new walls, full of lingering traditions and gray customs still surviving, which served as an antique poetic frame for its changing pictures of motley German life. Goethe remembered his childish exploring expeditions about the old walls, moats, towers, and posterns, with great delight. Directly behind his father's house was a large area of gardens, to which the family had no access, stretching away to the walls of the city. The boy used often to gaze on this forbidden Eden in evening hours from a room in the second story called the garden-room. Even after the lapse of sixty years, the many-coloured picture of these gardens,—the solitary figures of careful neighbours stooping to tend their flowers, the groups of skittle-players, and the bands of merry children,—all blended together in the warm sunset—the floating sounds of many voices, of the rolling balls, and the dropping ninepins—would again beset his imagination, bringing with them many a "tale of visionary hours."

Mr. Lewes remarks that the child's character frequently presents far more distinctly the ground-plan of the matured man's than the youth's, since the proportions of the whole are often completely disguised by the temporary caprices of newly-expanded passions and newly-gained freedom. This is, at all events, ex-



tremely true of Goethe, and is generally true of all casts of character where the permanent influence of a manly conscience does not start forth into life along with the new powers and new freedom it is to control. The sense of responsibility and moral freedom, once awakened, does not again subside, and where searching moral convictions have once taken hold on the character, the subsidence of youthful impetuosity does not give back again the characteristic features of childhood; but in Goethe this element was always faint, and the difference between the child's mind and the man's was only a difference in maturity of powers; when the spring-tide of youth fell back, his inward life was as it had been, only that all was stronger and riper. He was a reflective, old-fashioned, calmly-imaginative child, always fascinated by a mystery, but never, properly speaking, *awed* by it. It kindled his imagination; it never subdued him. He was full of wonder, and quite without veneration. In the "altar to the Lord" which the child secretly built on a music-stand of his father's at seven years of age, and on which he burnt incense in the shape of a pastoral, until he found that it was at the risk of injuring his altar, he was innocently playing with a subject which to almost any other child would have been too sacred for imaginative amusement. He was evidently charmed with the picturesqueness of the patriarchal sacrifices, and thought with delight of the blue smoke rising up to heaven beneath the first beam of the rising sun: of the religious feeling, the desire to *give up* anything of his own out of love to God, he had

not of course any idea ;—that in a child of seven no one would expect. But what is characteristic, is the absence of any restraining awe, in thus mingling the thought of God with his play at an age when he had already begun to think whether it was just in Him to send earthquakes and storms. Religion was already to him what it ever continued to be,—not the communion with holiness, but at most a graceful development of human life, a fountain of cool mystery playing gratefully over the parched earth. Mr. Lewes has translated a delightful anecdote of Goethe's relation to his mother, from Bettina von Arnim's account. That bold young lady's authority is generally more than questionable ; here, however, there is the strongest evidence of internal truth :—

“ This genial, indulgent mother employed her faculty for story-telling to his and her own delight. ‘ Air, fire, earth, and water, I represented under the forms of princesses ; and to all natural phenomena I gave a meaning, in which I almost believed more fervently than my little hearers. As we thought of paths which led from star to star, and that we should one day inhabit the stars, and thought of the great spirits we should meet there, I was as eager for the hours of story-telling as the children themselves ; I was quite curious about the future course of my own improvisation, and any invitation which interrupted these evenings was disagreeable. There I sat, and there Wolfgang held me with his large black eyes ; and when the fate of one of his favorites was not according to his fancy, I saw the angry veins swell on his temples, I saw him repress his tears. He often burst in with “ But, mother, the princess won't marry the nasty tailor, even if he does kill the giant.” And when I made a pause for the night, promising to continue it on the morrow, I was certain that he would in the meanwhile think it out for himself, and so he often

stimulated my imagination. When I turned the story according to his plan, and told him that he had found out the *dénouement*, then was he all fire and flame, and one could see his little heart beating underneath his dress! His grandmother, who made a great pet of him, was the confidant of all his ideas as to how the story would turn out; and as she repeated these to me, and I turned the story according to these hints, there was a little diplomatic secrecy between us, which we never disclosed. I had the pleasure of continuing my story to the delight and astonishment of my hearers, and Wolfgang saw with glowing eyes the fulfilment of his own conceptions, and listened with enthusiastic applause.’”

His self-command and self-importance showed themselves early. He once waited resolutely for many minutes till school-time was “up,” though his school-fellows were lashing his legs with switches till they bled, before he would defend himself by a single movement; and then he fell upon them with immense success. Like all petted children, he did not like school; his pride was hurt by the unrespecting self-assertion of the republic around him. His most intimate friends were usually women and younger men. He never could endure to be laughed at. Herder’s rather vulgar pun on his name (Göthe), made in college days,—

“Thou, the descendant of gods, or of Goths, or of gutters,”<sup>4</sup>—*was* perhaps a little annoying for the time; but it clearly rankled in his mind; and he mentions it bitterly forty years later, after Herder’s death, in the course of a very kindly criticism, as an instance of the sarcasm which rendered Herder often unamiable; charac-

<sup>4</sup> In German “Koth,” literally “mud.”

teristically adding this most true principle of etiquette, "the proper name of a man is not like a cloak, which only hangs about him, and at which one may at any rate be allowed to pull and twitch; but it is a close-fitting garment, which has grown over and over him, like his skin, and which one cannot scrape and flay without injuring him himself." As a small boy he is said to have walked in an old-fashioned way, in order to distinguish himself from his schoolfellows, and to have told his mother, "I *begin* with this. Later on in life I shall distinguish myself in far other ways." One cannot help thinking a little judicious whipping and *nonchalance* at home might at this period have been of some service to him. Yet the "oracular" so entered into his nature, that one could ill spare it now from his essence. It lends a certain antique grandeur to the light leaves of poetry that are twined round it.

His minute self-observation early showed itself. The following recollection in his Autobiography is extremely characteristic:—

"We boys held a Sunday assembly, where each of us was to produce original verses. And here I was struck by something strange, which long caused me uneasiness. My poems, whatever they might be, always seemed to me the best. But I soon remarked that my competitors, who brought forth very lame affairs, were in the same condition, and thought no less of themselves. Nay, what appeared yet more suspicious, a good lad (though in such matters altogether unskilful), whom I liked in other respects, but who had his rhymes made by his tutor, not only regarded these as the best, but was thoroughly persuaded they were his own, as he always maintained in our confidential intercourse.

Now, as this allusion and error was obvious to me, the question one day forced itself upon me, whether I myself might not be in the same state—whether those poems were not really better than mine, and whether I might not justly appear to those boys as mad as they to me? This disturbed me much and long; for it was altogether impossible for me to find any external criterion of the truth; I even ceased from producing, until at length I was quieted by my own light temperament, and the feeling of my own powers.”

He could not see then that what really distinguished him above his schoolfellows was not near so much, probably, the excellence of his verses, as the power of detecting and applying to his own case the general law of self-deception.

Goethe was, as he intimates in “*Wilhelm Meister*,” in a passage well known to be in fact autobiographical, a very inquisitive child, and as unscrupulous as spoiled children are in gratifying his inquisitiveness. His childish fondness for the “store-room” is rather universal and human than individual and personal. “More than any other of the young ones I was in the habit of looking out attentively to see if I could notice any cupboard left open, or key standing in its lock.” There are few minuter bits of life in his writings than his description of the predatory excursion into the store-room one Sunday morning, when the key had not been withdrawn. “I marked this oversight,” he says. He pilfered, however, with less than his usual self-possession; the cook made a “stir in the kitchen,” and even Goethe was flurried. But he seems to have had none of the ordinary childish shame and self-reproach connected with the adventure; his favourite

puppets were always dearer to him because of the "French-plum" fragrance which they had acquired in the scene of theft.

His delight in the theatre was the same through life. He liked the little mystery. He liked still better to have the key to the mystery. He was as quick as any child at a pantomime to find out "the man in the bear;" but it did not destroy his pleasure, especially if he was able to be "the man in the bear" himself; and besides, his heart was always in his eyes. But what mainly fascinated him in the theatre, I think, was its condensation and concentration of life into one consecutive piece. His imagination was wandering, digressive, microscopic, incoherent; he had the greatest difficulty in grasping in one vision a consecutive whole. He saw vivid points in succession, and saw the continuity and growth; but his sight was like the passing of a microscope over a surface,—it laid bare the transition, but did not give a connected vision. He saw too intensely and too far at each point to be able to sweep his eye quickly over the whole. The theatre helped to remedy this defect, and he was grateful to it; but for that very reason he never could write successfully for the theatre. The boy's passion for the theatre had one very bad effect. During the French occupation of Frankfort he (then a lad of ten to twelve years old) had a free admission to the French theatre, which he used daily, accompanied by no older friend. His mother unwisely obtained the reluctant permission of his father that he should go; and his consequent quick progress in French reconciled his

father to the habit. The lad had constant access behind the scenes and in the green-room along with his young French companions. Here I have little doubt the natural delicacy of his mind was first rubbed off. Probably he was constitutionally deficient in that element of mind which shame and reverence have in common (*αἰδώς*, as the Greeks called it); and during the French occupation of Frankfort, at a most susceptible age, he was subjected to influences that would be likely to have endangered the most delicate of natures. He was too young, his friends imagined, for danger; but certainly he was not at all too young for that kind of morbid curiosity about evil which is often more tainting than evil itself. Even in the late-written autobiographical recollections of his youth this is distinctly visible.

At the age of fourteen he was a great tale-composer; and one of these tales, "The New Paris," full of the genius of his later years, he has preserved in his Autobiography. It is a most characteristic tale, brimming over with the self-importance of the boy, and full also of the fanciful grace, the mysterious simplicity, and the simple mysteriousness of his older compositions. It is far the most graceful of his short tales; and must, I think, have received some touches from his older hand. For my own part, I greatly prefer it to the second part of "Faust." But the childlike delight in puzzling his readers is the same. The scene of the fairy-tale, which is autobiographic, is laid in gardens discovered by him beyond the old wall of the city. The tale ends with the following charming mystery:—



“The porter did not speak another word; but before he let me pass the entrance, he stopped me, and showed me some objects on the wall over the way, while at the same time he pointed backwards to the door. I understood him; he wished to imprint the objects on my mind, that I might the more certainly find the door which had unexpectedly closed behind me. I now took good notice of what was opposite to me. Above a high wall rose boughs of extremely old nut-trees, which partly covered the cornice at the top. The branches reached down to a stone tablet, the ornamented border of which I could perfectly recognise, though I could not read the inscription. It rested on the corbel of a niche, in which a finely-wrought fountain poured water from cup to cup into a great basin, that formed, as it were, a little pond, and disappeared in the earth. Fountain, inscription, nut-trees, all stood directly one above another; I would paint it as I saw it.

“Now, it may well be conceived how I passed this evening and many following days, and how often I repeated to myself this story, which even I could hardly believe. As soon as it was in any degree possible, I went again to the Bad Wall to refresh my remembrance, at least of these signs, and to look at the precious door. But, to my great amazement, I found all changed. Nut-trees, indeed, overtopped the wall, but they did not stand immediately in contact. A tablet also was inserted in the wall, but far to the right of the trees, without ornament, and with a legible inscription. A niche with a fountain there was far to the left, but with no resemblance whatever to that which I had seen; so that I almost believed that the second adventure was, like the first, a dream; for of the door there is not the slightest trace. The only thing that consoles me is the observation, that these three objects seem always to change their places. For in repeated visits to the spot, I think I have noticed that the nut-trees have moved somewhat nearer together, and that the tablet and the fountain seem likewise to approach each other. Probably, when all is brought together again, the door, too, will once more be visible; and I will do my best to take up the thread of the



adventure. Whether I shall be able to tell you what further happens, or whether it will be expressly forbidden me, I cannot say.

“This tale, of the truth of which my playfellows vehemently strove to convince themselves, was received with great applause. Each of them visited alone the place described, without confiding it to me or the others, and discovered the nut-trees, the tablet, and the spring, though always at a distance from each other; as they at last confessed to me, because it is not easy to conceal a secret at that early age. But here the contest first arose. One asserted that the objects did not stir from the spot, and always maintained the same distance: a second averred that they did move, and that too away from each other: a third agreed with the latter as to the first point of their moving, though it seemed to him that the nut-tree, tablet, and fountain rather drew near together: while a fourth had something still more wonderful to announce, which was, that the nut-trees were in the middle, but that the tablet and the fountain were on sides opposite to those which I had stated. With respect to the traces of the little door they also varied. And thus they furnished me an early instance of the contradictory views men can hold and maintain in regard to matters quite simple and easily cleared up. As I obstinately refused the continuation of my tale, a repetition of the first part was often desired. I was on my guard, however, not to change the circumstances much, and by the uniformity of the narrative I converted the fable into truth in the minds of my hearers.”

How vividly this reminds one of his mysterious conduct to Eckermann with regard to some portions of the second part of “Faust.” In that dark composition Faust asks Mephistopheles to show him Helena; and Mephistopheles tells him it can only be managed by application “to goddesses who live sublimely in loneliness, but not in space, still less in time—of whom to speak is embarrassment”—“the

mothers;" "a glowing tripod"<sup>5</sup> is to assure him that he has attained the deepest point of all, and by its shining he is to see the mothers. But there is *no way* there, as there *can* be no way into the "untrod-den and untreadable," where he is to be surrounded by "loneliness." On hearing the "mothers" mentioned, Faust starts back shuddering; and when asked why, only replies—

"Die Mütter! Mütter! 's klingt so wunderbar."  
(The mothers! mothers! it has the strangest ring.)

Poor Eckermann had been set to read this remarkable scene, and was, naturally, a good deal puzzled. But he shall tell his own story:

"This afternoon Goethe did me the great pleasure of reading those scenes in which Faust visits the mothers. The novelty and unexpectedness of this subject, with his manner of reading the scene, struck me so forcibly that I felt myself translated into the situation of Faust, shuddering at the communication from Mephistopheles. Although I had heard and felt the whole, yet so much remained an enigma to me that I felt myself compelled to ask Goethe for some explanation. But he, in his usual manner, wrapped himself up in mystery, looking on me with wide open eyes, and repeating the words,—

‘*Die Mütter! Mütter! 's klingt so wunderbar.*’

"I can betray to you no more, except that I found in Plutarch that in ancient Greece the mothers were spoken of as divinities.

<sup>5</sup> The passage is, it seems to me, a satire upon the Hegelian practice of deducing everything out of "the pure nothing," by what may be called the tripartite cork-screw philosophy, which does everything in logical triplets, but winds itself a little higher at each repetition.

This is all for which I am indebted to tradition ; the rest is my own invention. Take the manuscript home with you, study it carefully, and see to what conclusion you come."

The good childlike Eckermann conscientiously tasked himself to find the riddle out quite as anxiously as Goethe's boy-audience did about the door in the old wall ; perhaps it was even less worth while. He elaborated a most complex and difficult "view" on the subject of these mothers ; but Goethe let nothing further transpire. Indeed it might fairly wait at least till the nut-trees, the fountain, and the tablet in the old Frankfort wall had drawn together again.

There is one other slight incident of his boyhood so characteristic of the man that it is worth mentioning. The calm, unabashed, self-fortified boy appears in it the very image of the man. Coming out of the theatre, he remarked ponderingly to a companion, with reference to one of the young actors, "How handsomely the boy was dressed, and how well he looked ! Who knows in how tattered a jacket he may sleep to-night !" The mother of the lad, happening to be beside him in the crowd, took great umbrage, and read Goethe a long lecture. "As I could neither excuse myself nor escape from her, I was really embarrassed ; and when she paused for a moment, said, without thinking, 'Well, why do you make such a noise about it?—to-day red, to-morrow dead.'<sup>6</sup> These words seemed to strike the woman dumb. She stared at me, and moved away from me as soon as it was in any degree possible." This was not meant to give

<sup>6</sup> "Heute roth, morgen todt;" a German proverb.

pain; it was only that Goethe habitually cut short what annoyed him, without caring much how. He had the nerve and the presence of mind, and of other consequences he thought little. There is a like tale, referring to later years, of a fanatical admirer bursting into the bedroom of an inn where Goethe was undressing, and throwing himself ecstatically at his feet, pouring forth at the same time a set speech of adoration. Goethe blew out the candle and jumped into bed. This was truly a great inspiration;<sup>7</sup> but the power of calmly warding off anything that did not suit him was exercised quite without reference to the moral elements of the case. Goethe had at every period of his life a thoroughly kindly nature; but one, as it seems to me, quite unvisited by any devoted affection. The conception of really living for another probably never occurred to him. His attachments to women were numerous and violent, never self-devoting. For his mother and sister he clearly felt warmly, but certainly he was neither a fond brother nor a fond son. After his transition to Weimar, he visited his mother only at very long intervals, and never seems to have hastened to her side in any time of special trouble, though he always rejoiced to see her and wished to have her with him. In the last eleven years of her old age he never once visited Frankfort, his summer holiday always taking him in another direction—to Karlsbad or Marienbad. And his letters

<sup>7</sup> I do not know the authority for this anecdote of Goethe. Mr. Emerson used to narrate it, not without keen sympathy for the oppressed lion.

were too few to keep her well informed even of his more important movements. He was, in short, a kind and hearty rather than a deeply-attached brother and son. If he never gave himself up to an affection, he never demanded or even expected it from another. Never was there a less jealous or exacting man. He seldom interfered with his own calm process of self-culture for the sake of another. He never expected another to do it for him. And if this remark properly belongs to a later period of his life, yet the genial but pliant and self-considering nature of his relation to others is distinctly visible in his childhood. He was already beginning to accommodate himself to all inevitabilities, and to ward off, wherever possible, all that was foreign to his nature. The extent of his boyish studies was not less wide than that of his boyish experience of life. To Latin, Greek, Italian, German, English, and Hebrew, together with drawing, music, geography, and Roman law, he had given much time, and apparently made considerable progress in them before he went to college at sixteen. He scattered his studies, and had "alternate fits" of Hebrew and drawing, etc., but his retentive memory did not easily lose what it had once laid hold of.

In 1764 Goethe began that habit of falling in love, of which he never broke himself for the next sixty years. Mr. Lewes makes light of his love for Gretchen, and the scholiasts seem never to have traced her history. But boyish as his passion was, the separation clearly caused him no less intense a suffering, and a more inconsolable despair, than any subsequent adora-

tion. His mind had not yet got the strength to carry him through. His nature was still the dependent nature of a home-bred boy. He had as yet no intellectual passions, no penetrating consciousness of creative power. It is clear that this kind, sisterly Gretchen, was still living in his imagination when he immortalized her name in "Faust."

The night of Joseph II.'s coronation, when he forgot his secret door-key, by means of which, through his mother's connivance, he used to enter long after his father had supposed him to be in bed, was the last of his childhood. With his separation from Gretchen there came upon him the moody humours, the dark sentimental infinitudes, the confusion of energies, the thankless melancholies and boisterous caprices peculiar to that period of life when young men are most agreeable to themselves and most oppressive to mankind. The passion for Gretchen had involved him with a set not quite harmless. And the stiff dignity of his father was sadly wounded by having his son's name mixed innocently up in cases of swindling, and even forgery. He was subjected to the companionship of an accommodating tutor; and a year later, in the autumn of 1765, went forth to see the world as a student of the University of Leipzig.

Most poets' youth is turbid, and apt to be egotistical. Goethe's is not an exception. He seems to have had generally, when in good health, buoyant spirits. But the spiritual abysses are of course unfathomable. Mr. Lewes has given some very interesting letters

concerning Goethe at this time from his college friends. At Leipzig Goethe got a good deal of knowledge without much diligence, and also fell into dissipation. The only pure influence over him that he felt powerful was that of Gellert, the professor of *belles-lettres*, and one lady friend, the wife of a law professor. The latter died during his studentship. Gellert's mild influence he felt painful and a reproach to him, and he began to avoid it. Perhaps it was not very wisely exerted. He used, says Goethe, "to hold his head down, and ask us with his weeping, winning voice, whether we went regularly to church, who was our confessor, and whether we attended the holy communion. If we passed this examination but ill, we were dismissed with lamentations, we were more annoyed than edified; and yet we could not help loving the man heartily." Goethe's law-lectures were rather jokes. He naturally preferred drawing caricatures of the official persons in their official costume, to taking notes. Fritters (very good ones), hot from the fire, came into competition with one of these classes, and were considered the more attractive. Goethe fell deeply in love again at Leipzig; but he quarrelled with the young lady, and he seems to say the despair he felt at her loss was the impulse which plunged him into dissipation. This affection was the origin of his little pastoral piece, "The Lover's Humours," which certainly gives promise of his future power. Besides containing some fine lines, and one fair living character in profile, it shows that rich fertility of ordinary feeling and harmonious sentiment which must flow on

long in order to temper the mind to the higher creative mood. A poet who, like Gray, for instance, has no *flow* of level feeling, loses the predisposing influences from which the deeper, truer insight can alone come. When the poet has reached, as it were, the ordinary level of genial human emotion, then, and not sooner, do his special characteristics begin to work with effect. If he is not in the first place luxuriant in common feeling, he loses all the advantage of his higher faculties. Goethe, like all great poets, was most luxuriant in common thought and feeling; and when once fairly afloat in that, his genius began to work. The "Fellow-Sinners," which he also wrote at this same time, has equal ease, but not equal warmth, with the piece just mentioned, and consequently very little trace of his characteristic power. From Leipzig Goethe went home ill, after three years' residence, in 1768. His father was irritated by his delicate health, and still more by anything like hypochondriacal conversation. His mother and sister paid him, as is usual in such cases, something like divine honours. They were moped, and delighted to have an invalid to worship. He looked into alchemy, and began to think of Faust.

In the spring of 1770 he went to the University of Strasburg, where he fell in with Herder, who first introduced him to "The Vicar of Wakefield," the loose awkward machinery of which Goethe (who never had any power of constructing a plot) afterwards partly borrowed in his novel of "Wilhelm Meister." The exquisite humour, and childlike simplicity of taste in



that book, are Goldsmith's own. But in the style of representing nature and life Goethe is not at all unlike Goldsmith. Like him, he does not impartially paint, but rather vaguely indicates the principal influences of the scene before him. He sketches no outlined picture, at least of *men*—but gives one or two figures, hovering too close to the eye to be caught completely in any one glance, and which are presented therefore, in minute yet very significant successive details, to the closest conceivable scrutiny; and for the rest, he indicates only the most important inlets of accessory influence in a few words of loose spacious suggestion. As Goldsmith presents Dr. Primrose and his wife by such minute successive touches that not till you fall back from the story can you see them as a whole, and represents the daughters only by the general streams of influence they diffuse, the rosy and violet light their characters respectively reflect, in the vaguer distance, adding, too, those influences of external nature which most beset the senses, but no clear landscape,—so also Goethe painted in his three novels, “*Werther*,” “*Meister*,” and finally, though with more distinctive outline, and less attempt at indicating a whole character or a whole landscape by isolated samples, in the “*Elective Affinities*.” We do not wonder that he told Eckermann, in later years, that he found in Sir Walter Scott the suggestion of a wholly new school of art. That writer's strong, masterly, often hard outlines, present the most vivid possible contrast to the faint fringes of that luminous *nimbus* which usually involves his own most carefully finished figures.

While at Strasburg, Goethe made the acquaintance of the family which seemed to him the counterpart of Dr. Primrose's, and in which he appeared first in the character of Mr. Burchell; exchanging it, however, not for Sir William Thornhill's, but for his own. Pastor Brion had a little parsonage at Drusenheim, sixteen miles north of Strasburg, into which Goethe was introduced, in the disguise of a poor and dilapidated theological student, by a fellow-student. The latter was attached (or becoming so) to the eldest and most lively daughter, whom Goethe identified as the Olivia of Goldsmith's tale. The second daughter, Frederika, who took benign pity on the shabby theologian, and captivated his fancy by her simplicity and grace, reminded him of Sophia; but she little knew that instead of giving rise to a novel, she was starting a new epoch in German criticism, and spinning the first thread of a very ponderous "*Frederike litteratur*," in which an erudition as yet unborn would discuss, with prodigious learning and subtlety, after collation of MS. letters, personal examination of the place, and cross-questioning of aged survivors, the precise point where Goethe had crossed the Sesenheim road, the position of Frederika's own arbour, the date of the first kisses she bestowed, and many other matters of equal weight. To have spurred on heavy-armed German commentators (of the class who discuss a lost iota in fragments of Greek plays) into a cumbrous canter of exegetical sympathy with a little affair of the heart, must have been about as far removed from Frederika's presentiments, as this apparatus criticus is

from the light air of the life it "expounds." Imagine an Anthon's "edition of Tennyson's 'Miller's Daughter,' with critical notes," and you have a faint picture of the "Frederike litteratur."<sup>8</sup> Goethe acted his part skilfully, and promised to "supply" occasionally for the pastor on week-day occasions. But, disgusted with his shabby appearance, he fled the next day, only to change one disguise for another. He came back as the innkeeper's boy, with a "christening-cake" and an Alsatian *patois*; and when this disguise was penetrated, he took his own character, and began seriously to fall in love. The visit was often repeated, and Frederika's heart completely gained. Goethe now became uneasy. The presence of Frederika pained him, though he "knew of nothing more pleasant than to think of her while absent." He had to free himself from this influence, which threatened to introduce something foreign to his natural development. He was leaving Strasburg, and once more he visited the "golden children" at Sesenheim, where he found a gray desolate mist settling down over the little parsonage, instead of the fresh buoyant air of days gone by. "I reached her (Frederika) my hand from my horse; the tears stood in her eyes, and I felt very uneasy." He felt more than uneasy. These words

<sup>8</sup> There is a profoundly learned controversy, for example, as to whether one of Goethe's letters to a friend at this time was or was not written on the piece of blue paper in which some comfits, &c., had been sent to him from Strasburg. The question turns, to a considerable extent, on whether he gave the paper-bag with the comfits to the young ladies, or only the comfits out of it. It is discussed with laborious good faith.

copy only the blanched picture that remained in the old man's memory. Frederika fell ill; and Goethe, on his return to Frankfort living in bitter suspense as to the effect on her peace, and yet knowing that he could not comfort her without transforming himself and exchanging a quiet sentiment for real self-devotion of spirit, became restless and miserable. That his final decision was wrong is far from clear. The thought of devoting himself to her gave him no joy, but seemed to weigh him down. Yet it seems clear that the reason lay, not in the absence of anything which any other attachment ever gave, but in the reluctance which was now beginning to creep upon him to devote himself and his inward life to anything outside of himself. The idea of self-development, self-idealisation, as the only scope of his conscious life, was beginning to fascinate him, and to gnaw at the roots of his nature. If he could by one generous act of self-forgetfulness have devoted himself to secure Frederika's happiness, there seems some probability that he would have secured a far happier and clearer life for himself also. It was, perhaps, less the want of love,—for he never seems to have felt more love,—which prevented this, than the want of strength to cast away the miserable dream of keeping the course of his inward development free from all foreign interference. It was much later than this—when the self-idealising vein had become more prominent—that he wrote to Lavater: “The desire to raise the pyramid of my existence—the base of which is already laid—as high as possible in the air absorbs every other de-

sire, and scarcely ever quits me ;”<sup>9</sup> but the poison was already working in him. Goethe never became a selfish man in the coarse sense of the term. He always cultivated benignant unselfish sympathies as the most graceful elements in this same fancy-pyramid of his existence. He was generous by nature, and would give up, from kindly feeling, anything that was not of the essence of himself. But it soon became his habit to cultivate disinterested affection only as a subordinate element, needful to the harmony of a universally experienced nature. To have loved the goodness of either God or man more devotedly than he loved its reflex image in his own character, would have done him more good than all the sickly pottering with the “pyramid of his existence” with which he was so much occupied.

It would be absurd to say all this about Goethe’s youthful conduct to Frederika, were it not the type of what was always happening in his after-life, when he knew by experience that he very much preferred to be passively hampered by a wounded heart to being actively hampered by an affectionate wife. The essence of these tedious tortures was almost always the same. He wished for love with limited liability; he did not wish to devote *himself* to any one except himself. This “limited liability” did not so well meet the views of the young ladies<sup>10</sup> themselves, who were some-

<sup>9</sup> Lewes’s “Life of Goethe,” vol. ii. chap. i.

<sup>10</sup> A distinct classification of Goethe’s loves has not yet been added by the critics to the “chronology of the original” of his writings. It would be a material help to head the different years

times, to his infinite embarrassment, willing even to "go to America" with him, or anywhere else. This was meeting him a great deal more than half-way. He could not, of course, avail himself of the sacrifice.

Goethe returned to Frankfort, bringing with him a little harper-lad whom he had picked up at Mannheim and with thoughtless kindness promised to befriend. His mother, at first much perplexed, found the boy lodging and employment out of the house. "Götz von Berlichingen" was now in Goethe's mind, and, spurred on by his sister's incredulity as to his literary perseverance, he completed it in its first form in six weeks. To me it seems far the most noble as well as the most powerful of Goethe's dramas. I agree with Mr. Lewes, that in its first shape there are many fine elements which are lost in the later and revised edition. No doubt something is cut away that needed cutting away, and more appearance of unity is given by the condensation of Adelheid's episode. But this is the part on which Goethe's imagination had really worked with finest effect, and the gain to unity is a loss to poetry. It is the only great production of Goethe's in which a really noble, self-forgetful *man* stands out in the foreground to give us a moral standard by which

with the name or names of the ascendant star and some indication of its apparent brightness. There were about eight A 1's, "heiss und leidenschaftlich geliebte," &c.; five, at least, Æ 1's, with whom he stood "im innigsten Verhältniss der Liebe;" and, finally, a great number of "holde Wesen," some of them already obscured by shadows of time, who were recipients of a more transient adoration.

to measure the meaner characters. It is the only great production in which awful shadows of remorse haunt the selfish and the guilty. One reads in it that Goethe's mind had as yet by no means finally embraced the calm self-culture view of life—the view which looked upon woman's devotion, human life, indeed the whole universe itself, mainly as artistic material to be assimilated by the individual constitution, and at as little cost to the digestive system as that constitution would allow. Fascinating as *Egmont* is, *Egmont* himself is the later Goethe, the conscious master-builder condescending to accept from woman and man and God materials for his "pyramid of existence." *Götz* is a very different figure; and among all Goethe's masculine creations he stands alone—the only one who did not *use* the world, but *served* it. The play (in its early form) will be thought gross; but it has little of that tainting impurity which turns a microscope full upon the subtler workings of physical passion, to the great disfigurement of some of his later works. In another respect *Götz* is exceptional. It is curious that Adelheid in "*Götz von Berlichingen*" is the only feminine character of the proud passionate class that Goethe ever drew; and that Maria, much more like his other characters in type, is about the faintest and poorest of them. With all his unmistakable wealth and inimitable grace in producing women's characters, each as distinct from the other as Adelheid is from Maria, they are all, Adelheid only excepted, of the dependent, tender, worshipping class. Mr. Thackeray's Beatrice, in "*Esmond*," is less com-



pletely exceptional in his writings than Adelheid is in Goethe's. Thackeray and Goethe are alike in this, as in some other respects—both of them have drawn women as living as Shakespeare's. And all three, by one consent, are disposed to make their powerful queen-like women bad. No doubt this is according to nature; but Sir Walter Scott must have seen the exceptions, for his finest female characters (Rebecca, Flora, Die Vernon, etc.) are certainly of the queenly class. Goethe's predilections are explained by the fact that he painted, for the most part, the women who worshipped him, and it may be that he punished Adelheid for not being one of them by robing her in passion and in crime. She is the only woman in his works of whom we find no autobiographical trace.

In 1772 Goethe went to Wetzlar, ostensibly to watch chancery suits; and there culled some poignant experiences for his next work, "*Werther*." This he did not write, however, till 1774. The remarkable contrast, both in substance and form, between "*Götz*" and "*Werther*"—written within three years of each other—gives, however, some insight into Goethe's dramatic power and want of power. I find it asserted on all hands—Mr. Lewes vehemently concurring—that a poet must be a greater artist for entirely ignoring all moral partialities, and, as they say, picturing life as it is, not as it ought to be. There is a sense in which it is true (for instance, it is a valuable criticism on Edgeworthian art): but the sense in which it is put forward as a defence of the utter want of moral perspective in most of Goethe's productions is certainly not that sense



Compare, for instance, "Götz von Berlichingen" with "Werther," "Wilhelm Meister," the "Elective Affinities," "Egmont," and even "Faust." In the first there is as much moral evil as any appetite, however eager for "things as they are," could wish; but it is thrown into its right relative place by the appearance in the foreground of two noble and simple characters—Götz and Elizabeth—by which all the others are naturally measured. Shadows are shadows, and light is light. In "Werther" the moral evil introduced is far less—is, indeed, of a quiet, subtle, sentimental kind—the mere heart-eating rust and destructiveness of unmeasured self-indulgence; but there is nothing noble to contrast with it—nothing but the cold external phantom Albert, and the floating image of Charlotte reflected in such a mist of Wertherism that it has no distinctness at all. What is the mere artistic effect on the reader's mind? Almost universally this, that the picture, powerful as it is, misses its effect from the absence of any fine moral contrasts by which to measure it. It is like the picture of a mist seen from inside. Nothing adds more to the beauty of a landscape than vapours rising round a mountain's brow; but then you must stand out of the fog, and see the dark bold ridges round which the vapours climb. In "Werther" are painted wreath upon wreath of emotion, of blinding doubts and shapeless passions; no speck of firm land anywhere. This will probably be conceded of "Werther;" but the moral part of the criticism applies equally to Goethe's other works. We believe the extraordinary want of outline in his characters to be

greatly due to this entire absence of any attempt at moral proportion in all his later works. Werther is made, in one letter, to say most characteristically, "I scarce know how to express myself,—my power of representing things is so weak,—everything swims and wavers so before my mind, that I *can catch no outline*; but I fancy somehow that, if I had clay or wax, I could succeed in modelling. If it lasts longer, I shall get some clay, and begin kneading, even though it be only cakes after all." Werther's mind is so dissolved, that he can only feel and grope his way in the dark, as it were, to grace of form. This weakness is partly the expression of an artistic difficulty Goethe really felt in grasping in one glance any extensive outline of thought,—a difficulty due to the microscopic nature of his insight, which only travelled very slowly over a large surface of life: he often modelled his groups figure by figure; the outline of the whole grew up as he felt his way to it. But a part reason of this was, that he had no moral graduation for his groups,—no natural admirations which gave a unity to the whole and determined the line of the shadows. Outline is a result of comparison,—moral outline of moral comparison. You cannot compare without an implied standard. The heroes in "Werther," "Wilhelm Meister," "Tasso," "Faust," are such cloudy, shadowy pictures, because they are essentially sketches of moral weakness without any relief in characters of corresponding power. Albert, Jarno, Antonio, are *not* foils to them—they have not the force which the others want, but are simply deficient in the moral

qualities which make the former characters problems of some interest. Certainly, the former are soft, the latter hard. But the second set do not give strength as opposed to weakness, but rigidity as opposed to weakness.<sup>11</sup> What is wanted all along is some dim picture in the minds of Werther, Meister, Tasso, and Faust, of what they *would* be,—what it is which would lift them out of the imbecility of their purposeless career. This is the element never supplied. We are presented with a set of contradictions instead of contrasts. Only in Götz is there any picture of strength without hardness; only in Weislingen is there a picture of fatal irresolution that has a real vision of the career by which he might have been saved. The *moral* outline which Goethe's youthful remorse put into this picture has raised it, considered merely as a work of art, in many respects high above its fellows. So far from the truth is it that the poet must have no moral predilections at heart, that if he has none such, his pic-

<sup>11</sup> Goethe well knew, in physical nature, that soft things should not be contrasted with hard, but with firm. He had (I am not speaking ironically) an exquisitely fine sympathy with vegetable life. Consider this picture of a fruit-basket in "Alexis and Dora" (I quote the graceful version given among the "English Hexameter Translations" published by Mr. Murray in 1847):—

"Silently thou arrayest the fruit in the comeliest order,  
Laying the heavier gold-ball of the orange beneath;  
Next the soft-pulpt figs, that the slightest pressure disfigures;  
Lastly, the myrtle at top roofing the whole with its green."

If, instead of the orange, Dora had laid a cocoa-nut under the figs, she would never have made such an impression on the yielding heart of Alexis.

ture becomes feeble, watery, wavering. Impartiality in delineation, not impartiality in conception, is what is needed. Shakespeare frequently gives no foil to the character whose weakness he is delineating; but he always gives it some clear vision of the nobleness and the strength above it. Hamlet knows what he could do, and dare not. Lady Macbeth knows what she should do, and will not. Antony knows what he would do, and cannot. But Faust has no glimmering of salvation; Werther has no gleam of what he might be; Wilhelm is a milksop *pur et simple*; and Tasso's character is then, and then only, a fine picture if it be granted that he is supposed insane. It seems to me that no more remarkable breakdown of the theory of the "moral indifference" of art can be suggested than Goethe's writings. His poetry is perfect until it rises to the dramatic region, where moral actions are involved, and a moral faith therefore needed, and then it becomes blank, shadowy, feeble. "Wilhelm Meister" would not have been "a menagerie of tame animals," as Niebuhr called it with great truth, if Goethe had not lost the (never strong) moral predilections of younger days, but had purified his eye and heart for their insight into human weakness by reverent study of nobler strength.

Another criticism which has a real connection with that just made is suggested by the comparison of "Werther" and "Götz." Mr. Lewes truly says, that Goethe never gives enough importance to the action, the progress of events. He does not develop the characters essentially *through* the action, but on occa-

sion of the action. You do not feel that Götz has *come in* from that last scene; it is too much a series of pictures, like Hogarth's pictorial biographies; the art is much greater, no doubt, if you take them in succession; but the breath of the past has not passed into the present scene, each is almost intelligible in separation. A very great part of the skill in "Werther" consists in the gradual rise of the excitement,—the stages of passion;—still it is a series of pictures; there is nothing to oblige you to look back to the past and forward to the future. It might begin almost anywhere, and stop almost anywhere, and be intelligible still as a delineation of character. This is so also in "Egmont." It is less so in "Götz von Berlichingen," though it is too much so there, than in any other work. The past action is much more worked into the essence of the following scenes than is the case of "Egmont," "Meister," "Iphigenia," "Tasso," or "Faust." And the obvious reason is, that the actors have *moral* characters, and so the sense of what they had done or not done hangs upon them throughout; they do not turn up as complete in relation to each distinct scene as if they had had no previous life: they have a sense of the past, a presentiment of the future. The presence of an implicit moral estimate of the characters does not only help art by adding outline; for moral responsibility forges many a strong link between the past, present, and future, which is otherwise wanting. Is it not, indeed, the strongest of all links between the past and the future in actual life? Werther's uneasiness grows organically; but it grows as a tree puts out its

branches, without memory or reference to its past stages. Egmont does not grow at all. Faust does not grow. Tasso undergoes changes; but only those of a sensitive-plant, drawing in with every touch, expanding at every sunbeam. All Goethe's feminine creations grow; but usually it is the growth of affection only. The only portions of a coherent drama that Goethe ever wrote are the Gretchen elements in "Faust." That is the highest drama in every sense, and one of the most essential elements in it is a deep and true remorse.

After his return from Wetzlar, and publication of "Götz" and "Werther," Goethe became a famous man. The effect of this fame upon himself was certainly very great. Not only are the letters to Kestner clearly written under great excitement after the publication, but other correspondences which he then began are far more dizzy than "Werther" itself. His letters to the Countess von Stolberg are mostly mystical emotional quavers. This young lady he never saw. They struck up an inarticulate attachment on the strength of "Werther." Goethe rushed into a correspondence with her of this description: "My dear one,—I will call you by no name; for what are the names—friend, sister, lover, bride, wife, or even a word that expresses a union of all these names,—compared with the very feeling itself to which—I can write no more; your letter has come upon me at a strange moment.—Adieu—(written at) the very first moment."<sup>12</sup> And some of these remarkable letters are more incoherent still.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Düntzer in his "Frauenbilder aus Goethe's Leben," p. 271.

So greatly did Goethe err in afterwards representing "Werther" as setting his mind free from the fever of sentimentalism that not till after its publication did he fully succumb to it.

Introduced by his celebrity as a writer to many eminent men, Goethe began to see and to study a far wider and more various field of social life than he ever attempted to delineate. It might be matter of surprise that in so freely-moving a plot as that of "Wilhelm Meister" Goethe should not have anticipated the easy sketches of character which Dickens and Thackeray have made so popular, and thus effectively used his large experience of social life; for he never willingly let a grain of real experience go unused. The reason obviously is, that he had so little of the humour which makes sketches of *superficial* life and manners living and agreeable. His remarks on common men and manners and on uncommon men and manners are always subtle, often amusing; but you need to have his personal comments to give his descriptions of these trivial matters any interest; he has not the art of making his characters speak so as to explain their own folly; he cannot give just that touch of caricature by which Dickens effected this; he cannot introduce that background of fine irony by which Thackeray turned men into critics of themselves. He understood every-day German life as well as either Dickens or Thackeray understood every-day English life. Nothing could be much more skilful than his accounts, for instance, of the prophetic Lavater (whom Mr. Lewes most uncharitably and untruly terms a

“born hypocrite,” quite in contradiction to Goethe’s latest and maturest estimate), and of Basedow the educational reformer,—the one a man of real power, spoiled by being a lady’s preacher and by the needful devices for keeping up popularity which this involved; the other a coarse, self-indulgent, unscrupulous, and exceedingly dirty philanthropist, who characteristically enough had the greatest horror of baptism.<sup>13</sup> The only element wanting in Goethe’s descriptions is, not a perception in them which is to us ridiculous, but a thorough perception and enjoyment of the ridiculous part. He can see a full-blown absurdity, but not the delicate transition by which real life passes into unreality. His “*Plundersweilern Fair*,” and other things of that description written at this time, and his subsequent comic works (such at least as I know), of which Mr. Lewes thinks the “*Triumph of Susceptibility*” a fair specimen, are mere farces,—laughable on the stage, perhaps, but tiresome to read. “*Bombastes Furioso*” gives a good idea of this kind of production, but seems to me more amusing. It is strange that so great a poet had not a quicker eye for the boundary-line between reality and unreality, between things and words; he was never quite out of danger

<sup>13</sup> Schlosser, in his “*History of the Eighteenth Century*,” tells us that Basedow had a long dispute with his wife and the clergyman, in which both of them used all possible arguments and entreaties to induce him to give up the notion of having his daughter baptised “*Prænumerantia Elementaria Philanthropia*,” partly, I suppose, in ridicule of the ceremony, and partly as a puff of his Philanthropic Academy at Dessau.



of mistaking sham pathos for true ; he had never the eye of a great humorist for the subtle distinction between the ring of hollow and of solid metal in others, not always even in himself. A thin vein of genuine trash may be traced both in his compositions and his personal life,—a kind of inanity to which indeed all men are subject, but which a man with real humour would immediately have detected in himself and suppressed on the spot. I may take as instances the execrable sentimental device of giving an artificial appearance of life to Mignon's corpse, in the last part of "Wilhelm Meister" (against which Schiller meekly but hesitatingly protested),—or, in actual life, the ponderous sentimentality that induced Goethe, at the mature age of thirty-three, being seized with a taste for inscriptions, actually to engrave on a big stone in his garden at Weimar some lines beginning, "Here the lover has mused in silence on his beloved ;" nor does it appear that he ever suffered from nausea on beholding it. This sort of unreality was in the atmosphere, no doubt ; but Goethe was proof against so much malaria that was also in the atmosphere, that it is worthy of notice—especially in connection with the little artistic use he made of his wide experience of contemporary manners—that he was not able to keep himself completely free from *this*. His observations on society, which were very acute and rich and various, he threw into the form of epigrammatic maxims, and stowed them away in every gap and corner—suitable or unsuitable—of his many works. He used them but very little—owing, I think, to the unfitness

for successful manners-painting I have just indicated—in the really concrete delineation of the times he lived in and the society he had himself observed.

Soon after Goethe's literary fame was established, in the Christmas of the year 1774, he was introduced to Anna Elizabeth Schöнемann, whose mother, the widow of a rich Frankford banker, was one of the very few who at that time ever thought of assembling fashionable society in their houses so often as every evening in the season. To this young lady, so familiar in Goethe's writings as Lili, the poet now transferred his affections. His father and mother had been anxious that he should marry a quiet girl in their own circle, to whom he had been thrice assigned by a marriage-lottery in the picnics of the previous year—Anna Sibylla Münch—but he regarded this parental view as one in which it was impossible to concur, although in the meantime he was quite ready to be affectionate. To Lili, on the other hand, he was really warmly attached, and for a time betrothed ; but neither his father's pride nor his own found it easy to bear the reluctance felt towards the engagement by Lili's friends, who knew that Goethe had neither that amount of money nor of prestige to offer, for which, as it is said, not only the family, but the bank itself, had a craving. Poetry was no object. Goethe wrote many of his most exquisite lyrics under the inspiration of this attachment, sending them simultaneously to the young lady and to the newspaper.<sup>14</sup> It is curious to

<sup>14</sup> The lovely song, "Warum ziehst du mich unwiderstehlich,"

note how all Goethe's finest lyrics cluster round his attachments. Few things else seem ever to waken in him the same tones of unconscious airy melody. His other poetry, often exquisitely fine, has the polish of high art upon it;—but his lyrics seem to escape as unconsciously from the essence of the earth and air as the scent from a violet, or the music from a bird. Some of Goethe's finest lyrics sprang up at Leipzig under the genial influence of Käthchen Schönkopf; others, but scarcely of equal loveliness, owe their origin to Frederika; the third, and as yet the richest group, belong to Lili; but curiously enough, the richest cluster, I think, of all,—that which most resembles a lapful of fresh wildflowers,—was written in 1803, when Goethe was fifty-four years old, and is due, we imagine (from what Mr. Lewes tells us concerning the origin of the “*Elective Affinities*”), as well as the sonnets written two or three years later, to Minna Herzlieb, the ward of the Jena bookseller. The engaged or married ladies he adored appear to have had a more prosaic influence upon him.

But to return to Lili. After a good deal of torture, due to the elder representatives of both families, a worthy Fräulein Delf, much given to mediation, procured a tacit consent of the parents on both sides, and Goethe was engaged to Lili. This seems to have on

was, as Düntzer has ascertained, composed in March, 1775, and sent to Jacobi for insertion in the “*Iris*” at the same time. So of other songs. Of course names were not given; but the entire absence of any reserve in the sentimental life of that period is very curious.

the whole made him unhappy. His sister, who was married and at a distance, took a strong view against the match, and wrote letters about it ; the old Rath, she thought, would never so accommodate himself to the arrangement as to make Lili happy ; Goethe would be obliged still to live with his father and mother, as the custom was, and a young lady of family and wealth would put the former out. In short his sister was sure that for *Lili's sake*, he ought to break off the engagement, intimating, in fact, as Goethe implies, that she found her own husband but dull company, and that Goethe could never make up to Lili for the splendour she would resign. So, after some agonies, he suddenly departed for Switzerland with the two Counts von Stolberg, on a probationary absence, only hinting to Lili that he was going, for he could not bear to take leave. It appears to have been his intention, if he could have persuaded himself to endure the pain, to break off the engagement by going on into Italy ; if not, as proved to be the case, to return and see what fate should give. It is not easy to imagine, from the style of Goethe's narrative, that all this effort was made for Lili's sake. He admits that she never hazarded a doubt of her own happiness, and was willing to follow him even to America ; a solution which distressed her lover extremely. " My father's good house, but a few hundred yards from her own, was at all events a more tolerable condition to take up with than distant uncertain possibilities beyond the sea." They were actually engaged at this time ; and it does not seem very generous in Goethe to have left Lili without explana-

tion to fight his battles for him with her reluctant friends, in order to try experiments on his own fortitude.

This flight into Switzerland, while pursued by Lili's image, gave rise to one or two of his loveliest lyrics. As the heavy white masses of the distant Alps rose up in the early dawn, at the foot of the broad lake of Zürich, bordered by gently sloping cornfield banks, he composed the lovely little poem of which I have attempted to produce an English version. Goethe was at the time debating in his mind his future relation to Lili. I must premise, with Mr. Lewes, that Goethe is untranslatable. Some dim vision of the beauty of the poem may, however, glimmer through the following semi-transparent medium :—

I draw new milk of life, fresh blood,  
From the free universe,—  
Ah, Nature, it is all too good  
Upon thy breast, kind nurse!  
Waves rock our boat in equal time  
With the clear-plashing oar,  
And cloudy Alps with head sublime  
Confront us from the shore.

Eyes, have ye forgot your yearning?  
Golden dreams, are ye returning?  
Gold as ye are, O, stay above!  
Here too is life—here too is love.

Hosts of stars are blinking  
In the lake's crystal cup,  
Flowing mists are drinking  
The tow'ring distance up.

Morning winds are skimming  
Round the deep-shadowed bay,  
In its clear mirror swimming  
The ripening harvests play.

On the summit of the St. Gothard Goethe felt that his German home and love behind him were sweeter than all the wide warm loveliness into which the bright Ticino rushed eagerly before his eyes; and he returned, with hesitation in his heart, to Frankfort. Lili, naturally hurt at his unexplained absence, was soon as affectionate as ever, and the poet as happy; but it did not last long. The hurt pride at feeling himself rather tolerated than welcomed by her friends, and the dread of domestic fetters, returned. Gradually he broke the chain, and strove to flirt with other young ladies; but he was miserable. In this state he began "Egmont."

An invitation to visit the young Duke of Weimar was now very welcome to him. His father opposed his going, thinking it would place him in a dependent position. Moreover, the Weimar friend in whose company he had been invited to make the journey never appeared, and his father treated the mistake as an intentional slight. But Goethe's portmanteau was ready packed, his mind set upon change. His father proposed to give him money for an Italian journey. Goethe consented to go by Heidelberg and the Tyrol to Italy, if in Heidelberg he found no trace of the missing Weimar escort. There lived Fräulein Delf, the mediating lady who had in vain secured the consent of the reluctant parents to his engagement

with Lili. Her head was now busy with mediating a substitute scheme. She hoped to marry him to a lady at the Mannheim Court, and connect him permanently with it after his return from Italy. A courier came from Frankfort in the middle of the night to announce the arrival of the Weimar friend and to recall Goethe immediately. Fräulein Delf gave vehement counsel, urging him to decline, and go on into Italy. Goethe was in favour of Weimar, and ordered the postchaise. Long he disputed by candlelight with this lady, while an impatient postilion fidgeted about. At length Goethe tore himself away, apostrophising his astonished friend in the words of Egmont: "Child, child no more. Lashed as by invisible spirits, the sun-steeds of time whirl on the light car of our destiny; and for us it only remains in calm self-possession to hold fast the reins, and here to the right, there to the left,—here from a rock, there from a precipice,—to direct the wheels. Whither we are going who can tell? Scarcely can we remember whence we came." The "sun-steeds of time," with the aid of the visible postilion, took him safely to Weimar. Goethe, reluctant to talk of Providence, intimates, however, that this epoch in his life *was* providential, and that the "dæmonic" element to which a man ought to concede "no more than is fitting" was represented by his father, his own impatience, and good Fräulein Delf,—all eager to shatter his Weimar prospects. I am not at all sure that the reverse was not true—that the young Duke of Weimar may not have been the "dæmonic" element at this crisis, while the elderly lady may have spoken

the voice of higher warning,—if not in her match-making views, at least so far as she resisted the attraction to Weimar. Goethe had now reached the maturity of his powers, and henceforth we shall find his character more distinctly written in his works than in the monotonous incidents of his external life.

There is no part of Mr. Lewes's book which is more interesting and picturesque than the delineation of the Weimar localities and the new life the poet led. He has himself visited the place, and surveyed everything with a quick and thoughtful eye. The garden-house on the banks of the Ilm—the larger house to which Goethe removed in the town—the open-air theatricals at Ettersburg—and the life of the Court, are all gracefully and vividly sketched. Far from convincing me, however, that the new life had no injurious effect on Goethe's mind, even Mr. Lewes's apologetic narrative strengthens a strong impression in the other direction. That it made Goethe into a "servile courtier," no one with the faintest insight into the man could for a moment dream. Karl August, the young Duke of Weimar, was a lad of nineteen years—eight years younger than the poet; and though possessed of a strong will and a certain personal fascination, Goethe was far too conscious of his own superiority of mind to become a courtier, had even his temperament allowed it. But it did not. He was a very proud man, and one moreover whose life-long principle it was to resist every encroachment of external influence on his own individuality of character. He never endured interference with himself; but he frequently interfered with



remonstrances in order to tranquillise the mad humours of his young master. When Goethe said of himself in his old age, that he had always been conscious of an innate aristocracy which made him feel perfectly on a level with princes, and this too in its fullest measure before as well as since receiving the diploma which ennobled him, he spoke no more than the truth. He could endure any criticism ; but he could not endure any assumption of a right to influence and direct him. When the old poet Klopstock wrote to remonstrate with him, during his first year at Weimar, for the wild life he was encouraging at court, Goethe wrote back a polite reply as brief and haughty in its reserve as he could well have returned to a college companion. And it is as clear as day that the majestic mannerism of his later years was the stiffness of princeliness itself, not the petrified ceremony of a prince's satellite. But nevertheless it seems clear enough that some of the worst tendencies of his mind were fostered by his Weimar life. The man who replied to his dearest friends, Charlotte Kestner and her husband, when they expostulated on the public exposure of private relations, "Ye of little faith ! Could you feel the thousandth part of what 'Werther' is to a thousand hearts, you would not reckon the sacrifice you have made towards it,"—who surprised Fräulein Delf with the assurance that "the sun-steeds of time were whirling on the light car of his destiny,"—was not the man to be improved by living in a narrow circle of admirers where none of the humiliating and busy indifference of the great world could ever draw his keen eye away from himself to

those many high qualities of practical minds in which he himself was relatively deficient. It was good, even intellectually, for Goethe to have objects above himself; yet he left a social world, in which he must often have felt himself an insignificant learner, for a literary world in which all the talent was of the same kind as his own, but far beneath it.

Again, what was far worse than this, the Weimar atmosphere was stagnant with moral evil. Laborious indolence and pleasure-seeking were the great occupations of the greater part of the Court. The women had no employment at once so fashionable and interesting as intrigues. "There is not one of them," says Schiller, "who has not had a *liaison*;" and women's influence was the only influence which completely reached Goethe. "The first years at Weimar were perplexed with love-affairs," as he told Eckermann; and what love-affairs! One of them at least with a married woman, whose children were growing up around her to learn that the family-bond had no sacredness in their mother's heart, and that fidelity and purity were far less noble than passion in the eyes of the great poet of their nation. We know well that this was the sin of the century, and may not be in any large measure attributed to the personal laxity of any one man's conscience. But all the more is it to be lamented that Goethe left a social atmosphere where domestic virtue was held comparatively sacred, for one where it was almost a thing unknown. There was indefinitely more difference between Frankfort morals and Weimar morals than between the social virtue of

a wholesome busy city like Manchester and that of an idle watering-place cursed with barracks. Weimar was a place, like all idle places, eager for self-conscious stimulants of enjoyment. And it acted upon Goethe accordingly. He became more devoted to that *cultus* of his own character, which would not, perhaps, have been his worst occupation in a Court where there was very little so much worth attending to, if unfortunately it had not been the very worst influence for that character that he should thus affectionately nurse it. He never became, indeed, at all deeply infected either with the vulgar selfishness or with the frivolity of Court-life. It did not act upon him in this way. He had not been a year at Weimar, before he felt its genuine hollowness, and busied himself as much as in him lay with the regular discharge of official duty, and the busy earnestness of artistic creation. Always generous by nature, always deeply touched with the sight of suffering, it is pleasant, but not surprising, to find him giving away a sixth part of his income in charity, and still less surprising to find him doing it in secret, so that his left hand knew not what his right hand did. There never was a man less influenced by the love of approbation: he never through his whole life seems even to have felt the passion strongly agitating him, except perhaps in the flush of the months of his "Werther"-fame. His pride alone would have raised him above it, even if he had not had so strong a feeling of contempt for the public judgment that he was scarcely shaken by disapprobation, and scarcely confirmed by approbation. He had a thorough contempt for osten-

tation. When he was giving a poor man two hundred dollars a year, no one knew of it; and moreover he continued to give it, in spite of rather graceless and ungrateful acceptance of his charity. He pointed out calmly to his pensioner the unfitness of such conduct, and gave on. The way in which Weimar affected him so unfavourably was not by the contagion of selfishness, but rather by giving him such an inferior world with which to compare himself—by the easy victory it permitted him in active goodness on the one hand, and by the contagion of impurity on the other. Goethe had no active religious conviction, and of all men most needed to look up to his companions: he was in almost every direction, at this time, obliged to look down. "The mind," he said, "*is driven back all the more into itself*, the more one accommodates oneself to other men's modes of life, instead of seeking to adapt them to one's own: it is like the relation of the musician to his instrument"—a remarkable indication that these "other men's" life was on a platform below rather than above the speaker. Goethe felt that his companions were in a sense his "instruments," from whom he could bring forth fine music,—which was, however, his own music after all, not theirs. But he would not have felt so amongst men and women who, even in mere practical power and domestic virtue and devotedness, called forth his reverence as standing higher than himself.

The thing that jars upon the mind throughout Goethe's life, in his letters, his books—everything he said and did—is the absence of anything like devotion

to any being, human or divine, morally above himself. God he regarded as inscrutable, and as best left to reveal Himself. The future life was not yet. From all men he withdrew himself in a sort of kindly isolation—sympathising with them, aiding them, helping them against themselves, understanding them, but never making any of them the object of his life. The object of his life, so far as any man can consciously and permanently have one, was the completion of that ground-plan of character presented to the world in Johann Wolfgang Goethe. To perfect this he denied himself much both of enjoyment and real happiness; to keep this ground-plan intact, or to build upon it, he was always ready to sacrifice either himself or anybody else. To this he sacrificed Frederika's love, Lili's love, and his own love for them—the friendship of any who attempted to interfere with his own modes of self-development; to this he would at any time have sacrificed, had he supposed it needful, the favour of the duke and his position at Court; to this, in fact, his life was one long offering. There was nothing Goethe would not have given up for others, except any iota of what he considered to be his own individuality. To tend that was his idolatry. And that this self-worship grew rapidly upon him at Weimar, no one can doubt. Only compare the tone of "*Wilhelm Meister*" with that of "*Götz von Berlichingen*." Compare even his letters to the Frau von Stein with his letters to the Kestners. There is a real sense of humility and remorse gleaming out at times in the latter: with all his susceptibility to other persons'

sufferings, there is nothing but at most a sense of error, regret at past mistakes, generally merged in satisfaction at his own steady progress towards "clearness and self-rule," pervading the former. Compare the picture of the cold, self-absorbed, remorseless Lothario, held up as it is to admiration as a kind of ideal, with the ideal of Goethe's earlier days. Compare even Wilhelm Meister himself, who is meant, we are told, to be a progressive character, with Werther, who is meant to be a deteriorating character. With all his hysterics, there is far more trace of humility and sense of the wrong he is doing, and even effort to undo it, in the latter than in the former. Mr. Lewes discovers a "healthy" moral in Wilhelm Meister—that he is raised from "mere impulse to the subordination of reason, from dreaming self-indulgence to practical duty, from self-culture to sympathy." This is a mere dream of Mr. Lewes's. Wilhelm seems to me to become, so far as he changes at all, more selfish as he goes on. He begins with a real deep affection, and ends with the most cold and insipid of "preferences," which he is far from sure *is* a preference. He begins with resisting, and yet finally yields to, mere physical passion. He begins with an enthusiasm for at least one art, and ends with an enthusiasm for none. He begins with a passionate love of fidelity, and ends with worshipping Lothario, whose only distinction is calm superiority to such ideas. In short, he begins a kind-hearted enthusiastic milksop, and ends a kind-hearted milksop, with rather more experience and more judgment, but without any enthusiasm and with

far laxer morality. If this be Goethe's notion of progress, it gives but a painful idea of Goethe. The only element in which Wilhelm is made to grow better is knowledge and coolness; in everything else he degrades. You can see that even "*Werther*," much more "*Götz*," was written with a much distincter feeling of right and wrong, of the contrast between real strength and real weakness, between domestic purity and guilt, than "*Wilhelm Meister*."

And in purity of thought the change is more remarkable still. Goethe was not infected with the commonplace selfishness and frivolity of Court life—he was only driven in upon himself. He *was* infected with its impurity. His former writings had been coarse; but they were not coarser than the day, not so coarse as Shakespeare, not near so coarse as Fielding. "*Götter, Helden und Wieland*" and "*Götz*" are delicate to many parts of "*Tom Jones*." But while most of his later writings are perhaps less coarse than his earlier, they are indefinitely more tainting. The fragment of the "*Letters from Switzerland*," at first intended to be pieced on to the beginning of "*Werther*," several portions of "*Wilhelm Meister*," not a few minor poems, and parts of the "*Elective Affinities*," emulate Rousseau in their prurience. The "plague of microscopes" with which, as Emerson says, Goethe was pursued, follows about everywhere that aweless mind. Schiller (quoted by Mr. Lewes) says, that "whatever is permitted to innocent nature is permitted also" to the artist; but Goethe gazes away every shrinking reserve of "innocent nature"

with bold curious eye. This he seems to have learned in Weimar society. Goethe was in his own life higher, I believe, than he was in his works—fuller in sympathy and generous self-denials for others' sake than he ever makes his heroes to be. But his works betray the moral standard by which he consciously moulded himself,—the absolute prominence in his mind of the aim of self-cultivation—the infinite value he attached to *unmoral* self-mastery as an *end* and as in itself far higher than any duty for the sake of which he might master himself—the great deficiency of fidelity of nature, and of the purity with which fidelity is usually associated, and the general absence of moral reverence. They also reflect the geniality, the large charity, the intellectual wisdom, the complete independence of praise or blame, and the thorough truthfulness of mind which marked him throughout life. Goethe never deceived himself about himself.

During the ten years of Weimar life, before his Italian journey, Goethe's external life had but few recorded events. He was ennobled in 1782. He carried on a correspondence of billets with the Frau von Stein, which are extremely tiresome reading, and were never meant for publication. Mr. Lewes is very desirous to prove that all the trifling was on the lady's side, and that whenever she drew back from Goethe's advances, it was only in the spirit of a flirt. It is not a charitable view. In the complete absence of her letters, we know nothing about the matter. It does not seem at all impossible that visitings of remorse and delicacy, and real doubt of the disinterested de-



votedness of a man who considered so little her other domestic and social relations, may have led, in the earlier years of this connection, to the vibrations of feeling which are reflected in Goethe's replies. There is no need to judge the matter at all. It is almost the only case in which Mr. Lewes paints another in dark colours, without justification, for his hero's sake.

During these years Goethe wrote "Iphigenia" and a part of "Tasso" in their earliest shape; and worked hard at "Egmont," besides the composition of the finest part of "Wilhelm Meister." Nothing is more striking than the infinite distance between Goethe's success in imagining women and men. The feminine characters in Goethe's works are as living, we dare almost say more living than Shakespeare's, though there is much less variety and range in his conceptions of them. His men are often creditable sketches; sometimes faint, sometimes entirely shadowy; they are *never* so lifelike that we cannot imagine them more so. But his women are like most of his lyrical poems—perfect. "My idea of women is not one drawn from external realities," said Goethe to Eckermann, "but it is inborn in me, or else sprang up, God knows how. My delineations of women are therefore all successful. They are all better than are to be met with in actual life." "The more incommensurable and incomprehensible for the understanding, a poetic production is, so much the better," he said on another occasion; and judged by this standard also, almost all his women (the dull Theresa and Natalia in the later part of "Wilhelm Meister" alone excepted) are better than

almost any of his men. His men are conceptions badly outlined; his women spring up unconsciously out of his nature, exactly like his smaller poems. Mariana, Philina, and Mignon in "*Wilhelm Meister*," Clärchen in "*Egmont*," Gretchen in "*Faust*," and Ottilie in the "*Elective Affinities*," are characters any one of which would immortalise a poet. We think the reason of this lies deep in the nature of Goethe's genius.

There is a tiresome dispute whether he is more objective or subjective. He is really as much one as the other; for you find in all his poems at once a vague indefinite self, reflecting a defined and clearly outlined influence which impresses that self. His own mind is the sheet of water which reflects the image, and you see only that it stretches vaguely away far beyond and beneath the image it is reflecting; but what catches the eye is the clear outline of the reflected object in the water. His imagination was passive, not active; it did not, like Shakespeare's, by its own inherent energy mould itself into living shapes, and pass into new forms of existence. It always waited to be acted on, to be determined, to receive an influence; and then, while under the spell or pressure of that influence, it pictured with perfect fidelity the impressing power. Goethe was so far dramatic that he was never absorbed in depicting the mere result on himself, but rather reflected back with faithful minuteness the influence which produced these results. Where (as in "*Werther*," and perhaps "*Tasso*") he was mainly occupied in painting the internal effect

produced, he was far vaguer and less successful than where he lent his imagination to reflect truly the external influence which had thus deeply affected it. But still it was a passive imagination—*i. e.*, one which acted under the spell of external influences, and generally sensuous influences—not one which went voluntarily forth to throw itself into new forms and moulds. Hence, though far the best part of his poems is that in which external objects and social impulses are rendered again, you always find the vague mental reflecting surface by which they are thus given back; you always have both the deep dim Goetheish mirror and the fine outlined object which skims over it. The two never coalesce, as is the case in Shakespeare. If you have a Gretchen living before your eyes, you must have with her, as the condition of her existence, the shadowy Faust whom she impresses. The point of sight of the picture requires the presence of Faust; not because she is delineated *through* the effect produced on Faust's nature, but because you really only see that portion of her nature which was turned to Faust, and no other side. It may be noticed that, perfect as Goethe's women are, they are never very finely drawn in their mutual influence *on each other*; it is only in the presence of the lover who is for the time Goethe's representative that they are so strikingly painted. Even their lovely songs only express the same aspect of their character. Indeed it is of the essence of Goethe's feminine characters to express themselves in song. Each of them is a distinct fountain of song. But the current of all these songs sets

straight towards the poet himself, who is always in love with these creations of his own genius. As an instance, take the lovely little song of Clärchen in "Egmont," of which I attempt an English version for my non-German readers:—

Freudvoll	Cheerful
Und leidvoll	And tearful,
Gedankenvoll sein;	With quick busy brain;
Langen	Swayed hither
Und bängen	And thither
In schwebender Pein;	In fluttering pain;
Himmelhoch jauchzend,	Cast down unto death—
Zum Tode betrübt:	Soaring gaily above;
Glücklich allein	Oh, happy alone
Ist die Seele, die liebt.	Is the heart that can love.

If Goethe paints two women alone in each other's company, the scene either fails, or they are both talking away towards some imaginary masculine centre; and instead of being a telling dialogue, it falls into two monologues. Hence Goethe seldom attempts this at all. The scene between the two Leonoras is the worst in "Tasso," and those between Ottilie and Charlotte the worst in the "Elective Affinities;" that between Clärchen and her mother in "Egmont" is really only a soliloquy of Clärchen's; that between Elizabeth and Maria in "Götz" paints no mutual influence of the women on each other—they are simply placed in juxtaposition.

And Goethe's imaginative power is not only passive,—not only waits to be influenced,—but it is generally a sensuous influence that most easily and deeply im-

presses it. Hence, he not merely paints special women, but he can always give the very essence of a feminine atmosphere to characters not at all individually well-marked. He is so sensitive to the general social influence diffused by women, that he makes you feel a feminine power at work almost without copying the distinguishing peculiarities of any particular person; he can make a woman a very living woman without being what is called a *character* at all. This is what few can do. Mignon and Philina and Adelheid and Ottilie are women and something more—they are characters, and we should know them when we met them among a thousand. But all human beings are not thus marked characters; and when they are not, most authors in attempting to picture them become merely faint and vague. They depend on special peculiarities for the life of their pictures. Not so Goethe. Gretchen is little more than a simple peasant-girl. She has not a single striking characteristic; yet she is his finest creation. Clärchen and Mariana are a little more distinctively moulded, but very slightly; and yet they too live more in us than most of our own acquaintances. The little play “Die Geschwister” (The Brother and Sister) has a delightful heroine, who is nothing at all more than an ordinary affectionate girl; yet she has more life than would fill out a hundred “characteristic sketches” of modern novelists. It is Goethe’s extreme sensitiveness to all feminine influence that gave him this power. *Men* exercised in general no such influence over him, hence his imagination is never impressed by them; he has

to string up his powers of observation to draw them by sheer effort, and he seldom succeeds conspicuously even in delineating himself. Werther is scarcely so much a delineation of himself as of a series of emotions by which he had been agitated. Goethe needed to have some fascinating power taking hold of his imagination in order to call out its full strength. Nature could do it; women could do it; but he could not without such external help fascinate the eye of his own imagination. He could picture the influences which touched him most; but never, *as a whole*, the nature which they thus stirred. You do indeed get some notion of his men, who are all more or less quarried out of his own nature; but it is not by means of an unique influence which accompanies them everywhere, but only by a sort of secondary inference from the successive states of emotion in which we are accustomed to see them. Tasso, Werther, &c., are never personally known to us; we have gathered up a very good notion of them, but the mark of organic unity which distinguishes living influence from the fullest description has not been set upon them. Edward, in the "Elective Affinities," is perhaps the most skilful portrait amongst Goethe's male figures. But Goethe could not outline any character—did not even know the outlines of his own. Where he succeeded, it was not by outline, like Scott, but by a single key-note, usually a feminine undertone running through everything they say. When that is wanting, the character may be true, but does not hang together; it is a loosely-knit affair.

That Goethe should be called by Mr. Lewes "more Greek than German" struck me with astonishment. But in the special criticisms on his works Mr. Lewes virtually retracts altogether this general verdict. Greek poetry is never the product of this *passive* imagination, that waits for a distinct impression and then reflects back the impressing power. And moreover its subjects are as different from Goethe's as its intellectual process. It does not occupy itself with character so much as events. The characters are there more for the sake of the circumstance than the circumstance for the characters. And so too with the gods themselves. There is no anxiety to display their personal characters; they are not explained as in later times; their caprices or their kindness is only a part of the machinery for enlisting human interest. But Goethe makes a study of *his* Greek gods and demi-gods, and takes his idea entirely from the most god-like element he could feel in his own character—his cool self-dependence, and his power of shaking himself free at will from the acute impressions of pain or pleasure. There was nothing Greek at all about the character of Goethe's *intellect*. What Mr. Lewes had in his mind was the heathen element (not specially Greek) in his *character*. The entire superseding of personal trust by self-reliance, the absence of all trace of humility, the calm superior glance which he cast into the mystery around but never into the holiness above him, gave often a heathen colouring to his works; but his cast of intellect is strikingly, distinctively German, far more so than Schiller's. For one

whose mind yielded freely to any sensitive impression, he had a wonderful power of shaking off voluntarily all adhering emotions, and raising his head high above the mists they stirred. This power of assuming at will a cruel moral indifference to that which he did not choose to have agitating him, is the feeling he has so finely embodied in the picture of the gods contained in the song of the Fates in "*Iphigenia*,"—far the finest thing in a poem rich in small beauties, but without any successful delineation of human character. This last has been so well translated by an American writer,<sup>15</sup> and represents so truly a characteristic phase of Goethe's mind, that I will give it as a pendant to Mr. Lewes's translation from the "*Prometheus*."

"Within my ear there rings that ancient song,—  
 Forgotten was it and forgotten gladly,—  
 Song of the Parcæ, which they shuddering sang  
 When from his golden seat fell Tantalus.  
 They suffered in his wrongs; their bosom boiled  
 Within them, and their song was terrible.  
 To me and to my sister in our youth  
 The nurse would sing it, and I marked it well.

' The gods be your terror,  
 Ye children of men;  
 They hold the dominion  
 In hands everlasting,  
 All free to exert it  
 As listeth their will.

<sup>15</sup> Mr. N. L. Frothingham. "*Metrical Pieces*, translated and original." Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1855. A word or two is altered.



Let him fear them doubly  
Whome'er they've exalted !  
On crags and on cloud-piles  
The seats are made ready  
Around the gold tables.

Dissension arises :  
Then tumble the feasters  
Reviled and dishonoured  
To gulfs of deep midnight ;  
And look ever vainly  
In fetters of darkness  
For judgment that's just.

But *THEY* remain seated  
At feasts never failing  
Around the gold tables.  
They stride at a footstep  
From mountain to mountain ;  
Through jaws of abysses  
Steams towards them the breathing  
Of suffocate Titans.  
Like offerings of incense  
A light-rising vapour.

They turn, the proud masters,  
From whole generations  
The eye of their blessing ;  
Nor will in the children  
The once well-belovèd  
Still eloquent features  
Of ancestor see.'

So sang the dark sisters.  
The old exile heareth  
That terrible music  
In caverns of darkness,

Remembereth his children  
And shaketh his head."

The metre, like the thought, has a heathen cast. It speaks of cold elevation above all human prayers.

In the autumn of 1786 Goethe "stole away" from Carlsbad, having received secret permission from the duke for a lengthened journey in Italy, which had long been the dream of his life. Mr. Lewes has made no use of the many marvellous and most characteristic touches which Goethe's journal-letters of this tour contain. He speaks of them as of little interest. To me they seem the most fascinating and delightful of the prose works of Goethe. They not only illustrate his character, as it showed itself in the quiet isolated study of beauty, but they explain more than any other of his works the common ground in his mind where science and poetry met. I must give two very characteristic glimpses into his character which the incidents of this journey furnish. On his way to Venice he turned aside to visit the Lago di Garda, and took his way down the lake in a boat. A strong south wind obliged them to put in to Malsesina, on the east side of the lake, a little spot in the Venetian territory close to the (then) boundary between the Venetian and Austrian states. Goethe went up to sketch the old dismantled castle. He was absolutely alone and unknown—had not even introductions to any authorities in Venice. The stranger was observed, and soon many of the villagers had assembled round him with signs of displeasure. One man seized his drawing, and tore it up. Others

fetches the podesta. Goethe found that he was taken for an Austrian spy sent to make drawings of the strong points on the boundary. The podesta's clerk was threatening, the podesta himself was a captive to his clerk. Goethe was near being sent as a prisoner to Verona to account for his conduct. Instead of feeling nervous and embarrassed, however, he was enjoying the scene, and undertaking to instruct the Italian peasants in the pleasures and pursuits of an artist. "I stood on my steps, leaning with my back against the door, and surveyed the constantly increasing crowd. The curious dull glances, the good-natured expression in most faces, and all that usually characterises a mob, gave me the most agreeable impression." He assured them all, in his best Italian, that he drew for beauty and not for political designs. He explained that they could not possibly see so much beauty in the old castle, which they had known all their lives, as he did. The morning sun threw tower, walls, and rocks into the most picturesque light, and he began to describe the picture to them with a painter's enthusiasm. These picturesque objects being, however, in the rear of his audience, who did not wish to turn quite away from him, "they twisted round their heads like the birds which they call 'wrynecks,' in order to see with their eyes what I was thus glorifying to their ears." This ridiculous scene vividly reminded Goethe of the "chorus of birds" in the play of Aristophanes, and with intense amusement, he would not let them off without a detailed dissertation on every element of beauty in the picture, particularly dwelling on the ivy

which hung about the walls. His presence of mind extricated him from the scrape.

A still more characteristic incident occurs on his voyage from Sicily back to Naples. The ship should have passed the straits between the Island of Capri and the mainland. Evening came on; Vesuvius glowed brightly; sheet-lightning was in the air; it was a dead calm; the captain had missed the course; a very slow but decided under-current was drifting them straight on the rocks of Capri; the herdsmen were visible on the rocks, shouting that the ship would strand; on deck was a crowd of Italian peasants—men, women, and children; handkerchiefs were held up to try and find a breath of air by which they might be saved; the women screamed reproaches on the captain, and all was shrieking and confusion. “I,” says Goethe, “to whom anarchy had ever been more hateful than death itself, found it impossible to be longer silent. I stood up, and represented to them that their cries and shrieks were stunning the ears and brains of those from whom alone help could be expected. As for you, I said, retire into yourselves, and then put up your most fervent prayers to the Mother of God, with whom it alone rests, whether she will intercede with her Son to do for you what He once did for the apostles, when, on the stormy lake of Tiberias, the waves were already washing into the ship while the Lord slept; and yet, when the helpless disciples awakened Him, He immediately commanded the winds to be still, as He can now command the breeze to blow, if it be His holy will.” These words had the best effect. The women fell on their

knees, left off abusing the captain, and fell to prayer. They were so near the rocks, that the men seized hold of beams to stave the ship off, directly they should be able to reach them. "My sea-sickness, which returned in spite of all this, compelled me to go down to the cabin. I threw myself half-stunned on my mattress, and yet with a certain pleasant sensation, which seemed to emanate from the sea of Tiberias; for the picture in Merian's illustrated Bible hovered quite clearly before my eyes. And thus the force of all sensuous-moral impressions is always strongest when men are quite thrown back into themselves." Goethe lay here "half-asleep," with death impending, till his companion came down to inform him that a light breeze had just sprung up to save them. There is no incident more characteristic of the calm self-possessed artist in Goethe's whole life,—the "musician adapting himself to his instrument;" playing thus skilfully on strings which were deficient in his own mind, in order to bring out tones of feeling for which there were ulterior reasons; then lying down to dream so vividly of what he really held to be but a picturesque legend, that all the awe of death was held at a distance by the vivid light of that "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude." This one scene brings out the secret at once of the man's vast personal influence, and of the poet's yielding wax-like imagination, more vividly than any incident of his life.

It was in his Italian journey that his poetic powers culminated, and that science and art met in his mind. You see the meeting-point in his descriptions of what

he saw. He fits his mind so close to the objects he studies, that he not only takes off a perfect impression of their present condition, but becomes conscious of their secrets of tendency, and has often a glimpse back into what they have been. Goethe discovered, as is well known, that all the parts of a plant—stalk, leaf, stamen, petal, fruit—are but various modifications of the same essential germ, best exhibited in the leaf. It was a most characteristic discovery. But to understand the mental process by which it was made—to prove that it was not, in him, due to a mere scientific tendency—just look at this glance of his into the essence of a quite different thing,—the amphitheatre, written at Verona: “It ought not to be seen empty, but quite full of men; for, properly speaking, such an amphitheatre is made in order to give the people the imposing spectacle of themselves, to amuse the people with themselves. If anything worth looking at happens on a flat space, the hindmost seek in every possible way to get on higher ground than the foremost; they get on to benches, roll up casks, bring up carriages, and plank them over, cover any hill in the neighbourhood, and thus a *crater* forms itself. If the spectacle is often repeated, such a crater is artificially constructed,” &c. Now this illustrates the way in which Goethe became so great in criticism, so great in science, so great in description, and so great in the more conscious and less inspired part of his poetry. He moulded himself with such flexible mind to everything he studied, that he caught not only the existing present, but the state which had just preceded, the

state which would follow; he caught the thread as it untwined, he caught not the "being" only (*das Sein*), but the "becoming" (*das Werden*). He had no gift for experimental science. He did not even *believe* in laws of nature that did not make themselves felt on the living surface of things. He rejected "refraccional" theories of light with scorn, because the coincidence that certain geometrical and arithmetical properties attach to the laws of colour (and it really is nothing more than a coincidence) did not explain in any way the living colours as they shine upon the eye. What is it to the living perception that the length of the wave of the red ray is *greater* than that of the violet ray; does length explain anything about colour? It is only a sort of inward thread of order running through the phenomena, which is quite independent of the essence of the phenomena as they affect the living organs of man. Goethe had no faculty at all for this experimental detection of aids to *knowledge*, which are not in any way aids to living insight. He thought it a kind of mathematical back-stair to optics, which it was mean to desire; you ought to look the phenomenon livingly in the face, and explore its symptoms as you do the physiology of a plant or an animal. He used the microscope to detect what is really going on; but he despised an hypothesis which left the physiology of colour just where it was.

Indeed, his science and his poetry and his descriptions alike were of the microscopic order; not that they had the confinement of the microscope, for his

eye ranged freely ; but I mean, that he rather pierced nature and life at many points in succession, letting in gleams of an indefinite vista everywhere, than combined all he conceived and saw in one co-existing whole. Look at his finest poems and descriptions. It is the intensely vivid gleam thrown on single spots, not the aspect of the whole, that makes you seem to see with your own eyes what he describes. Thus, in one of his finest poems, "Hermann and Dorothea," every touch of description will illustrate what I mean. And the sense of breadth and freedom pervading it is given in the same way by transient glances sideways and forwards, which open out little vistas of life in many directions, without completing them in any :—

"Und die Hengste rannten nach Hause, *begierig des Stalles* ;  
 Aber die Wolke des Staubes quall unter den mächtigen Hufen.  
 Lange noch stand der Jüngling und sah den Staub sich erhe-  
 ben,  
 Sah den Staub sich zerstreu'n ; so stand er ohne Gedanken." <sup>16</sup>

What a vivid *impression* (it is only one or two strokes for a picture, not properly a picture) is here given, by means of pursuing a little side-path of insight into the feelings of horses, and then fixing the eye intensely just on that dreamy cloud of dust in the dis-

<sup>16</sup> And the horses started off home, pricking their ears for the stable,  
 But a cloud of dust grew under the rushing hoofs of their gal-  
 lop.  
 Long the youth stood still, and watched the dust whirling up-  
 wards,  
 Watched the dust settle down,—thus stood he vacant in spirit.



tance which would most catch the eye of a man in a reverie! It is always by casting these isolated piercing glances in two or three directions that Goethe produces his vivid impressions. When Hermann and Dorothea, for instance, are walking by moonlight to the village, there is no attempt to paint the scene; but each object, as it comes in view, is made to flash on the eye of the reader. Thus:—

“‘How sweet is the glorious moonshine, as clear it is as the daylight;

I can surely see in the town the houses and courtyards quite plainly,

In that gable a casement,—I fancy I count every pane there.’

Then they rose, and went downwards through the cornfield together,

Dividing the thick-standing corn, and enjoying the splendour above them;

And thus they had reached the vineyard, and passed from the light into shadow.”

When Goethe returned from Italy in 1788, his genius had reached its highest maturity. “Faust” (his greatest work) was virtually written, though afterwards modified, and not published for eighteen years. “Iphigenia” and “Egmont” had received their last touches, and “Tasso” was all but finished. The really fine part of “Wilhelm Meister” was in existence; all that he added afterwards was a dreary superinduced element of “high art,” a painful “Hall of the Past,”—except indeed the religious episode, which is a study from memory, a reproduction of the “experience” of a gentle mystic whom both he and his mother had dearly loved. “Hermann und Doro

thea" is the only great poem of any length which he wrote afterwards, in 1796, and it is far the most perfect, though not the richest of them all.

During his Italian residence he had only fallen in love once. He returned reluctantly to the north, like a child from a Christmas visit, feeling that everything at home was old and slow, and that he, coming from the sweet south, was bringing "gold for brass, what was worth a hundred oxen for what was worth ten." Even the Frau von Stein was tedious; the Italian lady had displaced her. In this mood he fell in with Christiane Vulpius, a girl of no culture and considerably lower rank than himself, who, after being for seventeen years his mistress, became in 1806 his wife. There can be no doubt that he was passionately in love at first, and that his passion ripened afterwards into a real and deeper affection, which had sufficient strength, when he found his heart attracted to another, to enable him to resist the danger and remain faithful to the mother of his child, in spite of the serious estranging influences arising from her intemperance. Goethe's connection with Christiane, if judged by the lax morality of his age,—by which alone we can fairly judge him, when we have once admitted, as we must do, that he was in no way morally purer than his age—that, indeed, in his estimate of these matters he had become less pure since his residence in Weimar,—was surely not the worst of his life. It is in its origin that it is most offensive. That he should either allow himself to encourage passion without love, and feel no horror, no self-abasement, but rather immortalise it

by using it as literary capital for "elegies;" or, on the other hand, if he did feel real love for this poor girl, that he could endure to write about her to friends in the tone of his letters to the Frau von Stein,—is one of those facts concerning Goethe which makes one feel that a wider gulf divided his nature from purity and fidelity than any merely passionate sins could create. During the first months of his *liaison* he writes, in answer to the Frau von Stein's remonstrances, "And what is this relation? Who is beggared by it? Who lays any claim to the feelings I give to the poor creature? who to the hours I pass with her?" And again: "I will say nothing in excuse; but I beg thee to help me, so that the relation which is so objectionable to thee may not become yet worse, but remain as it is. Give me thy confidence again; look at the thing in a natural light; allow me to speak to thee quietly and reasonably about it, and I may hope that all will be once more right between us." That a man should write in this tone about a woman he really loved, and keep her in so humiliating a position in which he knew that she was a mark for the contempt of his friends, is hardly credible. And yet, if he did not really love her, that he should have felt no self-reproach and disgust at his own conduct, while he calmly worked it up into poetry, is still more revolting and still more incredible. The truth seems to be that he did really love her, and yet was insensible to the dishonour to himself and to her implied in writing and *thinking* of his relation to her in this way, and permitting his friends' neglect. Mr.

Lewes says that Christiane declared later she had herself resisted the marriage. Possibly she may have wished to excuse Goethe; possibly it really was so; but the decision lay with him, and no false theories can relieve him from the charge of permitting a permanent dishonour to rest upon the woman who was to him in the place of a wife. He took her to live with him immediately on the birth of his son, and never again forsook her. But I can hardly doubt that one great exciting cause for the habits of intemperance in her which caused him so much misery was the consciousness of her miserable position in society,—slighted as she was by the very friends whom Goethe most honoured and loved, Goethe permitting the slight. Schiller never seems to have sent her one greeting in his letters, nor even alludes to her existence; while Goethe's messages to Schiller's wife are constant and courteous. Contrasts of this kind should surely have stung him to the quick, if he really honoured and loved her as a wife. Since Mr. Lewes's book was first published, letters have appeared from Goethe and his wife to Dr. Nicolaus Meyer of Bremen, a medical student in Jena in 1798, who resided in Goethe's house in the winter 1799-1800. The correspondence adds little to what we knew; but the letters from Christiane Vulpius (who in 1806 became Christiane Goethe) confirm Mr. Lewes's conception of her as an uncultivated but not vulgar person; and one or two show great depth of feeling. The editor intimates that they were poorly spelt and worse written; but in those days many ladies of rank had little knowledge of this kind. The letters

—both Goethe's and his wife's—are mostly about herrings, butter, and port wine. Goethe's letters are seldom very good. He saved up his best things for type. One does not expect literary merit from Christiane Vulpius. But her letters are simple, house-wifely, and friendly. It seems she had a genius for jams, which had in part gained her Meyer's esteem. Parts of one or two letters, written in 1805, during a dangerous illness of Goethe's, give a glimpse of the thread of pain in her life. She tells Meyer that Goethe has "now for three months back never had an hour of health, and frequently periods when one fancies he must die. Think only of me—who have not, excepting yourself and him, a single friend in the world; and you, dear friend, by reason of the distance, are as good as lost . . . Here there is no friend to whom I could tell all that lies on my heart. I might have many; but I cannot again form such a friendship with any one, and shall be forced to tread my path alone." Seldom, indeed, in these letters, does she express feeling of this kind, which gives it more meaning when it is expressed. She says again, "I live a life of pure anxiety." Then she writes a better account, adding, that though better, she fears "it is but patchwork. O God, when I think a time may come when I may stand absolutely alone, many a cheerful hour is made wretched."<sup>17</sup> The sentence in which Goethe announces to

<sup>17</sup> I have before alluded to the fact, that Goethe's passion for Minna Herzlieb gave rise to his novel of the "Elective Affinities," and is depicted in the love of Edward for Otilie. It seems, now, not improbable that Meyer's friendship for Christiane Vulpius at

Meyer, in 1806, his own marriage, is characteristic. He speaks of the French occupation of Weimar, and the misery it caused, and adds: "In order to cheer these sad days with a festivity, I and my little home-friend (*Hausfreundin*) yesterday resolved to enter with full formality into the state of holy matrimony, with which notification, I entreat you to send us a good supply of butter and other provisions that will bear carriage."

Early in the new century, Goethe's growing attachment to Minna Herzlieb seems to have given rise to one of the richest groups of minor poems that he ever wrote; and of one of these so beautiful a translation has come into my hands,<sup>18</sup> that I venture to hope it will

least suggested the relation of the Captain to Charlotte in the same novel. Meyer must have been at least six or seven years younger than Christiane, as he was born in 1775. But it seems from these letters that the friendship between them had been strong, and not without sentiment. Christiane keeps Meyer's picture in her room, and speaks of the constant pleasure and comfort that she derived from looking at it. It was after, and immediately after, Meyer's own marriage in 1806, that Goethe determined to take this step, and announced it to him in the curious form given above. There is no allusion at all to her marriage in any of Christiane's letters to Meyer. She speaks of his own marriage thus:—"I have been especially pleased to hear that you have at last resolved to enter the state of holy matrimony, in which I heartily wish you happiness, and believe that you will also be convinced of these my sentiments." Meyer and his wife visited Weimar on their wedding journey: a great chasm in the correspondence occurs immediately afterwards.

<sup>18</sup> Translated by Mr. J. C. Richmond, lately the "Native Minister" of New Zealand.

at least convey some feeling of the charm of Goethe's little ballads:—

## THE HILL CASTLE.

Aloft stands a castle hoary  
On yonder craggy height,  
Where of old each gate and doorway  
Was guarded by horse and knight.

The doors and the gates lie in ashes,  
And silence broods over all;  
I clamber about unchallenged  
On the ancient mouldering wall.

Close here lay a cellar, of yore  
Well filled with the costliest wine;  
With the bottle and pitcher no more  
Steps the maiden merrily in.

No more in the hall the beaker  
She sets for the welcome guest;  
No more for the holy altar  
She fills the flask of the priest,

To the thirsty squire in the courtyard  
No more the flagon she gives;  
No more for the fleeting favour  
Their fleeting thanks she receives.

For burnt are the ceilings and floors,  
Into ashes long long ago passed;  
And corridor, chapel, and stairs,  
Are splinters and rubbish and dust.

Yet when on a merry morning  
From these crags I saw with delight,  
With lute and with wine, my darling  
Ascending the stony height,—

Seemed a gay entertainment to burst  
From the dulness of still decay,  
And it went as, in times long passed,  
On a joyous and festive day.

It seemed the most stately rooms  
Were prepared for some guest of worth;  
It seemed from those hearty old times  
A loving pair had stepped forth;

And as if stood the holy father  
Within his chapel hard by,  
And asked, "Will ye have one another?"  
And we smilingly answered "Ay."

And when our hearts' deep emotion  
In music broke forth aloud,  
Rang out the mellow-voiced echo  
In answer,—instead of the crowd.

And when, at the coming of even,  
In silence all was entranced,  
And the sun from the glowing heaven  
On the craggy summit glanced,

The squire and the maiden, like nobles,  
Shine out in that golden blaze;  
Again the goblet she proffers,  
And again his thanks he pays.

Goethe seems ultimately to have battled firmly with, and finally subdued, the affection which thus renewed the freshness of his poetry with a second spring of even greater beauty than the first; but the whole story, as he has embodied it in the "*Elective Affinities*," is a thoroughly repulsive one, and no mind but one so



destitute as Goethe's of natural remorse for the most humiliating class of sins, could have given such experience publicity in a work of art. The book betrays, in spite of its power, some of the diffuseness of age ; a very great part of it is devoted to describing the laying down of a new gravel-walk and the making a summer-house.

In 1816 his wife died ; and Goethe's burst of grief was terrible. We are told<sup>19</sup> that he utterly lost his presence of mind, kneeled down beside her death-bed, and seizing her hands, cried out, "Thou wilt not forsake me ! No, no ; thou durst not forsake me." The verse he wrote on the day of her death has more true affection than all his poems of passion together.

The last sixteen years of Goethe's life were passed in tranquil labor at the completion of his unfinished works. Now and then he wrote a lovely little poem. In 1818, when he was in his 70th year, came one of those little flashes of song,—giving birth to a poem like those which, he tells us, he would in his youth often get up to scribble off in the middle of the night, or write down on the first scrap of paper he found, not even venturing to set the paper straight, lest the little mechanical act should put to flight the flow of the inspiration. Its beauty is quite as strange as that of the poems of his youth. Goethe always loved the song, and said it was of the very essence of himself. Here is a faint version of it, which I insert less as a poem than as a light on the old man's character :—

<sup>19</sup> Preface to Meyer's "Correspondence."

## AT DEAD OF NIGHT.

At dead of night I went, reluctant going—  
 A wee wee boy, across the churchyard-way,  
 To father's house, the pastor's; heaven was glowing  
 With star on star—oh, sweetly twinkled they  
     At dead of night.

Then in broad life, when new impellings drove me  
 To seek my love—impellings which she sent—  
 The stars and Northern-lights in strife above me—  
 I, going, coming, drank in sweet content  
     At dead of night.

Till the bright moon at last in her high season,  
 So pure so clear, me in my darkness found;  
 And with her, willing, thoughtful, vivid Reason  
 Her light about my past and future wound  
     At dead of night.

He fell in love once or twice more; and in 1823 was said to be near marrying again. The result, as usual, was *not* marriage, but an elegy—of beauty not greatly inferior to that which the poems of earlier days can show, and which, as his youngest and dearest poem, he copied out in Roman letters on fine vellum, and tied with a silk band into a red morocco cover, in which glory Eckermann saw it. Mr. Lewes, in deference to physiology, unpleasantly and untruly calls the story of an old man's life a "necrology." As a *man* Goethe was never so complete as in his old age.

The only great addition to his fame which the last twenty years of Goethe's life produced was the con-

versations with Eckermann,—a book which gives to the English reader a far clearer conception of his personal influence than any other of his works. He never runs an opponent through, like Dr. Johnson: indeed, he does not willingly talk with an opponent at all. He rather flows round his disciple like an atmosphere, leaks into you at every pore, and envelops you in such a calm wide mist of wisdom, that you *can* only say what he means you to say so long as you breathe that atmosphere. There is no possibility of a contest. There is no point to contest. He credits you with a truth whenever you open your mouth (*lässt das gelten*, as the Germans say); only he circumvents it with a whole mass of modifying thought; so that it would be easier to bring the air itself to a point than to bring the question you are discussing to an issue. In his old age he recurred again frequently to his religious belief, and some of his most fascinating conversations have relation to it. Goethe had a taste for religion and a shrewd guess at the next world; but his mind seems to have been quite devoid of personal trust. He was perhaps the wisest man totally without moral humility and personal faith whom the world has ever seen. He took the pantheistic view of God along with the personal view of man.<sup>20</sup> He knew that man was a free and responsible being, but he could not attribute human attributes of any kind to God; he thought the Infinite would be best honoured by merely denying finite characteristics, and leaving Him unapproached:—

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the fine little poem, “Das Göttlich.”

“Feeling is all in all;  
Name but an earthly smoke,  
Darkening the glow of heaven.”

And not only “name” but *definite* thought concerning God he equally rejected. “No one,” he says, “now doubts the existence of God any more than his own;” but “what do we know of the idea of the divine, and what shall our narrow conceptions say of the Highest Being?” And so of immortality also; he believed in it by a sort of extension of his insight into nature, but he put it aside as not bearing in any way on this life. “I do not doubt of our future existence, for nature cannot afford to throw away any living principle (*ἐντελέχεια*). But we are not all in the *same manner* immortal; and in order to manifest ourselves as a powerful living principle in the future we must *be* one.” Immortality was no present aid to him; he thought we should wait to rest on it till we had gained it. “To the able man *this* world is not dumb; why should he ramble off into eternity? what he really *knows* can be apprehended.” And he was annoyed with anything that he thought a fuss about the matter.

Speaking of a poem by Tiedge relating to this subject, he says:—

“Wherever you went, there lay ‘Urania’ on the table. ‘Urania’ and immortality were the topics of every conversation. I could in no wise dispense with the happiness of believing in our future existence, and, indeed, could say, with Lorenzo de Medici, that those are dead for this life even, who have no hope for another. *But such incomprehensible subjects lie too far off, and only disturb our thoughts if made the theme of daily*

*meditation.* Let him who believes in immortality enjoy his happiness in silence, without giving himself airs thereupon. The occasion of 'Urania' led me to observe that piety has its pretensions to aristocracy no less than noble blood. I met stupid women, who plumed themselves on believing, with Tiedge, in immortality, and I was forced to bear much catechising on this point. They were vexed by my saying I should be well pleased to be ushered into a future state after the close of this, only I hoped I should *there* meet none of those who had believed in it here. For, how should I be tormented! The pious would throng around me, and say, 'Were we not right? Did we not foresee it? Has not it happened just as we said?' And so there would be ennui without end.

"All this fuss about such points is for people of rank, and especially women, who have nothing to do. *But an able man, who has something to do here, and must toil and strive day by day to accomplish it, leaves the future world till it comes, and contents himself with being active and useful in this.* Thoughts about immortality are also good for those who have small success here below, and I would wager that better fortune would have brought our good Tiedge better thoughts."

In only one sentence do we catch a glimpse of a time when Goethe had looked to God for a Father's help, and, at least for a moment, conceived the spiritual world not as the mere unknown space beyond life, but as the inspiring love which shines everywhere into it. "We may lean for a while," he says once, in speaking of his youth, "on our brothers and friends, be amused by acquaintances; rendered happy by those we love; but in the end man is always driven back upon himself, *and it seems as if the Divinity had so placed Himself in relation to man as not always to respond to his reverence, trust, and love; at least not in*

*the terrible moment of need.*" There had, then, been a time when the easy familiarity with which the young man scrutinised the universe had been exchanged for the humble glance of a heart-stricken child ; and he had shrunk away from that time (as he did from every hour of life when pain would have probed to the very bottom the secrets of his nature), to take refuge in the exercise of a faculty which would have been far stronger and purer had it never helped him to evade those awful pauses in existence when alone the depths of our personal life lie bare before the inward eye, and we start to see both "whither we are going, and whence we came." Goethe deliberately turned his back upon those inroads which sin and death make into our natural habits and routine. From the pleading griefs, from the challenging guilt, from the warning shadows of his own past life, he turned resolutely away, like his own Faust, to the alleviating occupations of the present. Inch by inch he contested the inroads of age upon his existence, striving to banish the images of new graves from his thoughts long before his nature had ceased to quiver with the shock of parting ; never seemingly for a moment led by grief to take conscious refuge in the love of God and his hopes of an hereafter.

And so, with his eyes still clinging to the life he left, on the 22d March, 1832, he passed away himself, while drawing with his finger pictures in the air and murmuring a last cry for "more light." During the years which have intervened, the influence of his writings in England has steadily increased. He has

been held up as the wisest man of modern days, and by some half-worshipped as a demigod. And, in truth, his was a light and spacious mind. I grant that he was the wisest man of modern days who ever lacked the wisdom of a child; the deepest who never knew what it was to kneel in the dust with bowed head and broken heart. And he was a demigod, if a demigod be a being at once more and less than ordinary men, having a power which few attain, and owing it, in part, to a deficiency in qualities in which few are so deficient; a being who puts forth a stronger fascination over the earth because expending none of his strength in yearnings towards heaven. In this sense Goethe was a demigod:—

“He took the suffering human race;  
He read each wound, each weakness clear;  
He struck his finger on the place,  
And said, ‘Thou ailest here, and here.’”

He knew all symptoms of disease, a few alleviations, no remedies. The earth was eloquent to him, but the skies were silent. Next to Luther he was the greatest of the Germans; next—but what a gulf between! “Adequate to himself,” was written on that broad calm forehead; and therefore men thronged eagerly about him to learn the incommunicable secret. It was not told, and will not be told. For man, it is a weary way to God, but a wearier far to any demigod.

## II.

# NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

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HAWTHORNE has been called a mystic, which he was not,—and a psychological dreamer, which he was in very slight degree. He was really the ghost of New England,—I do not mean the “spirit,” nor the “phantom,” but the ghost in the older sense in which that term is used, the thin, rarefied essence which is to be found somewhere behind the physical organization: embodied, indeed, and not by any means in a shadowy or diminutive earthly tabernacle, but yet only half embodied in it, endowed with a certain painful sense of the gulf between his nature and its organization, always recognising the gulf, always trying to bridge it over, and always more or less unsuccessful in the attempt. His writings are not exactly spiritual writings, for there is no dominating spirit in them. They are ghostly writings. Hawthorne was, to my mind, a sort of sign to New England of the di-



voice that has been going on there (and not less perhaps in old England) between its people's spiritual and earthly nature, and of the difficulty which they will soon feel, if they are to be absorbed more and more in that shrewd hard earthly sense which is one of their most striking characteristics, in even *communicating* with their former self. Hawthorne, with all his shyness, and tenderness, and literary reticence, shows very distinct traces also of understanding well the cold, inquisitive, and shrewd spirit which besets the Yankees even more than other commercial peoples. His heroes have usually not a little of this hardness in them. Coverdale, for instance, in the "Blithedale Romance," and Holgrave, in the "House of the Seven Gables," are of this class of shrewd, cold, inquisitive heroes. Indeed there are few of his tales without a character of this type. But though Hawthorne had a deep sympathy with the practical as well as the literary genius of New England, it was always in a far-removed and ghostly kind of way, as though he were stricken by some spell which half-paralysed him from communicating with the life around him, as though he saw it only by a reflected light. His spirit haunted rather than ruled his body; his body hampered his spirit.

Yet his external career was not only not romantic, but identified with all the dullest routine of commercial duties. That a man who consciously *telegraphed*, as it were, with the world, transmitting meagre messages through his material organization, should have been first a Custom-house officer in Massachusetts,

and then the Consul in Liverpool, brings out into the strongest possible relief the curiously representative character in which he stood to New England as its literary or intellectual ghost. There is nothing more ghostly in his writings than his account of the Consulship in Liverpool,—how he began by trying to communicate frankly with his fellow-countrymen, how he found the task more and more difficult, and gradually drew back into the twilight of his reserve, how he shrewdly and somewhat coldly watched “the dim shadows as they go and come,” speculated idly on their fate, and all the time discharged the regular routine of Consular business, witnessing the usual depositions, giving captains to captainless crews, affording costive advice or assistance to Yankees when in need of a friend, listening to them when they were only anxious to offer, not ask, assistance, and generally observing them from that distant and speculative outpost of the universe whence all common things looked strange.

Hawthorne, who was a delicate critic of himself, was well aware of the shadowy character of his own genius, though not aware that precisely here lay its curious and thrilling power. In the preface to “*Twice-told Tales*” he tells us frankly, “The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear brown twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages.”

It is one of his favourite theories that there must be a vague, remote, and shadowy element in the subject-

matter of any narrative with which his own imagination can successfully deal. Sometimes he apologises for this idealistic limitation to his artistic aims. "It was a folly," he says in his preface to the "*Scarlet Letter*," "with the materiality of this daily life pressing so intrusively upon me, to attempt to fling myself back into another age, or to insist on creating the semblance of a world out of airy matter, when, at every moment, the impalpable beauty of my soap-bubble was broken by the rude contact of some actual circumstance. The wiser effort would have been to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of to-day, and thus to make it a bright transparency; to spiritualise the burden that began to weigh so heavily; to seek resolutely the true and indestructible value that lay hidden in the petty and wearisome incidents and ordinary characters with which I was now conversant. The fault was mine. The page of life that was spread out before me was so dull and commonplace only because I had not fathomed its deeper import. A better book than I shall ever write was there; leaf after leaf presenting itself to me, just as it was written out by the reality of the flitting hour, and vanishing as fast as written, only because my brain wanted the insight and my hand the cunning to transcribe it. At some future day, it may be, I shall remember a few scattered fragments and broken paragraphs and write them down and find the letters turn to gold upon the page."

And yet that dissatisfaction with his own idealism which Hawthorne here expresses never actually sufficed

to divert his efforts into the channel indicated. In the "Blithedale Romance" he tells us that he chose the external scenery of the Socialist community at Brook Farm "merely to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives. In the old countries with which fiction has long been conversant, a certain conventional privilege seems to be awarded to the romancer; his work is not put exactly side by side with nature; and he is allowed a license with regard to every-day probability, in view of the improved effects which he is bound to produce thereby. Among ourselves, on the contrary, there is as yet no such Fairy Land so like the real world that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference, but with an atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own. This atmosphere is what the American romancer wants. In its absence, the beings of imagination are compelled to show themselves in the same category as actually living mortals,—a necessity that generally renders the paint and pasteboard of their composition but too painfully discernible." And once more, in the preface to his last novel, "Transformation," he reiterates as his excuse for laying the scene in Italy, that "no author without a trial can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy

wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land. It will be very long, I trust, before romance-writers may find congenial and easily-handled themes either in the annals of our stalwart republic, or in any characteristic and probable event of our individual lives. Romance and poetry, ivy, lichens, and wall-flowers, need ruin to make them grow." These passages throw much light on the secret affinities of Hawthorne's genius. But it would be a mistake to conclude from them, as he himself would apparently have us, that he is a mere romantic idealist, in the sense in which these words are commonly used,—that he is one all whose dramatic conceptions are but the unreal kaleidoscopic combinations of fancies in his own brain.

I may, perhaps, accept a phrase of which Hawthorne himself was fond,—“the moonlight of romance,”—and compel it to explain something of the secret of his characteristic genius. There are writers—chiefly poets, but also occasionally writers of fanciful romances like Longfellow's “Hyperion”—whose productions are purely ideal, are not only seen by the light of their own imagination but constituted out of it,—made of moonshine,—and rendered vivid and beautiful, if they are vivid and beautiful, merely with the vividness and beauty of the poet's own mind. In these cases there is no distinction at all between the delineating power and the delineated object; the dream is indistinguishable from the mind of the dreamer, and varies wholly with its laws. Again, at the opposite extreme, there

is a kind of creative imagination which has its origin in a deep sympathy with, and knowledge of, the real world. That which it deals with is actual life as it has existed, or still exists, in forms so innumerable that it is scarcely possible to assert that its range is more limited than life itself. Of course the only adequate example of such an imagination is Shakespeare's, and this kind of imaginative power resembles sunlight, not only in its brilliancy, but especially in this, that it casts a light so full and equable over the universe it reveals, that we never think of its source at all. We forget altogether, as we do by common daylight, that the light by which we see is not part and parcel of the world which it presents to us. The sunlight is so efficient that we forget the sun. We find so rich and various a world before us, dressed in its own proper colours, that no one is reminded that the medium by which those proper colours are seen is uniform and from a single source. We merge the delineative magic by which the scene is illuminated in the details of the scene itself.

Between these two kinds of creative imagination there is another, which also shows a real world, but shows it so dimly in comparison with the last as to keep constantly before our minds the unique character of the light by which we see. The ideal light itself becomes a more prominent element in the picture than even the objects on which it shines; and yet is made so, chiefly by the very fact of shining on those objects which we are accustomed to think of as they are seen in their own familiar details in full daylight. If the

objects illuminated were not real and familiar, the light would not seem so mysterious; it is the pale uniform tint, the loss of colour and detail, and yet the vivid familiar outline and the strong shadow, which produce what Hawthorne calls the "moonlight of romance." "Moonlight in a familiar room," he says, in his preface to the "Scarlet Letter," "falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all its figures so distinctly, making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility,—is a medium the most suitable for a romance writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests. There is the little domestic scenery of the well-known apartment; the chairs, with each its separate individuality; the centre table, sustaining a work-basket, a volume or two, and an extinguished lamp; the sofa, the bookcase, the picture on the wall;—all these details, so completely seen, are so spiritualised by the unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance and become things of intellect. Nothing is too small or too trifling to undergo this change, and acquire dignity thereby. A child's shoe, the doll seated in her little wicker carriage, the hobby-horse,—whatever, in a word, has been used or played with during the day, is now invested with a quality of strangeness and remoteness, though still almost as vividly present as by daylight. Thus, therefore, the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other." Sir Walter Scott's delineative power par-

takes both of this moonlight imagination and of the other more powerful, brilliant, and realistic kind. Often it is a wide genial sunshine, of which we quite forget the source in the vividness of the common life which it irradiates. At other times, again, when Scott is in his Black Douglas mood, as I may call it, it has all the uniformity of tint and the exciting pallor of what Hawthorne terms the moonlight of romance.

At all events, there is no writer to whose creations the phrase applies more closely than to Hawthorne's own. His characters are by no means such unreal webs of moonshine as the idealists proper constitute into the figures of their romance. They are real and definitely outlined, but they are all seen in a single light,—the contemplative light of the particular idea which has floated before him in each of his stories,—and they are seen, not fully and in their integrity, as things are seen by daylight, but like things touched by moonlight, *only so far* as they are lighted up by the idea of the story. The thread of unity which connects his tales is always some pervading thought of his own; they are not written mainly to display character, still less for the mere narrative interest, but for the illustration they cast on some idea or conviction of their author's. Amongst English writers of fiction, we have many besides Shakespeare whose stories are merely appropriate instruments for the portraiture of character, and who therefore never conceive themselves bound to confine themselves scrupulously to the one aspect most naturally developed by the tale. Once introduced, their characters are given in full,—both that side of



them which is, so to say, turned *towards* the story, and others which are not. Other writers, again, make the characters quite subsidiary to the epical interest of the plot, using them only to heighten the colouring of the action it describes. Hawthorne's tales belong to neither of these classes. Their unity is ideal. His characters are often real and distinct, but they are illuminated only from one centre of thought. So strictly is this true of them that he has barely *room* for a novel in the ordinary sense of the word. If he were to take his characters through as many phases of life as are ordinarily comprised in a novel, he could not keep the ideal unity of his tales unbroken; he would be obliged to delineate them from many different points of view. Accordingly his novels are not novels in the ordinary sense; they are ideal situations, expanded by minute study and trains of clear, pale thought into the dimensions of novels. A very small group of figures is presented to the reader in some marked ideal relation; or if it be in consequence of some critical event, then it must be some event which has struck the author as rich in ideal or spiritual suggestion. But it is not usually in his way—though his last novel gives us one remarkable exception to this observation—to seize any glowing crisis of action when the passion is lit or the blow is struck that gives a new mould to life, for his delineation; he prefers to assume the crisis past, and to delineate as fully as he can the ideal situation to which it has given rise, when it is beginning to assume a fainter and more chronic character.

But, however this may be, almost all Hawthorne's tales embody single ideal situations, scarcely ever for a moment varied in their course in any essential respect. For instance, to take his shorter tales, the mockery of the attempt to renew in wasted age the blasted hopes of youth is crystallized into a ghostly *tableau vivant* in the "Wedding-Knell." The absolute isolation of every man's deepest life, and the awe which any visible assertion of that isolation inspires, even when made by the mildest of our guilty race, is translated into an eerie picture in the "Minister's Black Veil." So in the "Great Stone Face" we have an embodiment of the conviction that *he* is best fitted to fulfil any great human hope or trust whose heart is constantly fed upon the yearning to find the perfect fulfilment of it in another. So in "Roger Malvin's Burial" we are shown how an innocent man, who is too cowardly to face the mere appearance of guilt, may thereby incur a remorse and guilt as deep as that from the faintest suspicion of which he shrank. And so we may run through almost all the tales properly so called.

I do not mean that in any of them the author thought the thought first in its abstract form, and then condensed it into a story. I should suppose, on the contrary, that the artistic form is the one in which the idea of the tale first flashed on him, and that the work of elaboration only gave more substance and greater variety of colour to the parts. But not the less was the essence originally ideal, since every touch

and line in his imagined picture was calculated to impress some leading thought on the reader.

But it is only when we look at his longer tales, whose dimensions would lead us to expect more variety of aspect in the characters, more circumstance, and less sameness of leading *thought*, that this characteristic of Hawthorne's tales becomes striking. The stories of the "Scarlet Letter," of the "House of the Seven Gables," and of "Transformation," might all have been included in their full ideal integrity, and with all the incident they contain, in the "Twice-told Tales" without adding more than a few pages to the book. I do not mean that thus compressed they would produce the same, or anything like the same, haunting impression; but only that, as far as either the *aspect* of his characters or the circumstantial interest of the stories is concerned, there need be no compression in thus shortening them. The omissions would be most important, indeed, to the effect; but they would be the omission of pale contemplative touches, imaginative self-repetitions, and so forth, which seldom indeed give us a single glimpse of any other than the one side of his characters, or add a second thread to the one interest of the tale.

In the "Scarlet Letter," for instance, there is but one conception, which is developed in three—perhaps I should say four—scenes of great power, and that is the deranging effect of the sin of adultery on the intrinsically fine characters of those principally affected by it, with a special view to its different influence on the woman, who is openly branded with the shame,

and on the man, whose guilt is not published, and who has a double remorse to suffer, for the sin, and for the growing burden of insincerity. The effect of the sin on the child who is the offspring of it is made a special study, as are the false relations it introduces between the mother and child. Throughout the tale every one of the group of characters studied is seen in the lurid light of this sin, and in no other. The only failure is in the case of the injured and vindictive husband, whose character is subordinated entirely to the artistic development of the other three.

In the same way the predominant idea of the "Blithedale Romance" is to delineate the deranging effect of an absorbing philanthropic idea on a powerful mind,—the unscrupulous sacrifices of personal claims which it induces, and the misery in which it ends. There is scarcely one *incident* in the tale properly so called except the catastrophe, and what there is is so shrouded in mystery as to have the enigmatic character of a *tableau vivant*, not too mysterious for a distinct drift, but of doubtful interpretation as to details. The author seems to say to the reader, "Here is a group of characters in relations tending to illustrate how much more sacred are personal affections than any abstract *cause*, however noble: what these relations exactly are, except as they illustrate my idea, I will not say, as that is quite non-essential; you may imagine them what you please,—I tell you only enough to impress you with my predominant conviction."

Again, in the "House of the Seven Gables" we

have a picture studied to impress on us that both personal character, and the malign influences of evil action, are transmitted, sometimes with accumulating force, even through centuries, blighting every generation through which they pass. This subject would apparently involve a series of sketches; but only two are introduced from the past, and the family characteristics are so anxiously preserved as to make even these seem like slight modifications of some of the living group. Hawthorne with rare art pictures the shadow of the past as constantly hanging, like a baneful cloud, over the heads of his figures; and every detail, even the minutest, is made to point backwards to the weary past from which it has derived its constitutional peculiarities. Even the little shop which "old maid Pyncheon" reopens in the dark old house is not new. A miserly ancestor of the family had opened it a century before, who is supposed to haunt it, and the scales are rusty with the rust of generations. The half-effaced picture of the ancestral Pyncheon which hangs on the walls, the garden-mould black with the vegetable decay of centuries, the exhausted breed of aristocratic fowls which inhabit the garden,—every touch is studied to condense the dark past into a cloud hanging over the living present, and make the reader feel its malign influence. The only incident in the tale is the light thrown upon a crime,—which had been committed thirty years before the story opens,—by the sudden death of the principal representative of the family, from the same specific disease, in the same chair, and under the same circumstances,

as that of the old ancestor and founder of the family whose picture hangs above the chair.

The same criticism may be made on Hawthorne's last complete novel. The sole idea of "Transformation" is to illustrate the intellectually and morally awakening power of a sudden impulsive sin, committed by a simple joyous, instinctive, "natural" man. The whole group of characters is imagined solely with a view to the development of this idea. Hawthorne even hints, though rather hesitatingly, that without sin the higher humanity of man could not be taken up at all; that sin may be essential to the first conscious awakening of moral freedom and the possibility of progress. The act of sin itself is the only distinct incident of the tale; all the rest is either extraneous dissertation on Art, or the elaboration and study of the group of characters requisite to embody this leading idea. A tale containing the whole ideal essence of the book, and in this instance, though only in this instance, almost equally powerful, might have been told in a few pages.

And yet I am very far indeed from meaning to say that the microscopic diffuseness with which Hawthorne enlarges these mystic studies into the length of an ordinary novel is wasted. For the secret of his power lies in the great art with which he reduplicates and reflects and re-reflects the main idea of the tale from the countless faces of his ghostly imagination; until the reader's mind is absolutely haunted by it. There are many among his shorter tales, which now occupy perhaps only five or ten pages, which would have

gained infinitely in power by similar treatment, without the addition of a single fresh incident or scene. As they read now they have almost a feeble effect; they give the writer's idea, and no more; they do not fill the reader with it; and Hawthorne's peculiar genius lies in the power he possesses to be haunted, and in his turn to haunt the reader with his conceptions, far more than in their intrinsic force. Look at the central notion of his various minor tales, and you will perhaps be struck with a certain ideal simplicity, and a strange dash of lurid colour in them that will impress you as promising, but no more. But let him summon this idea before you in the innumerable Protean shapes of his own imagination, with alterations of form just striking enough to make it seem at once the same and something fresh, and before he has done with you you are pursued, you are possessed, you are beset with his notion: it is in your very blood; it stares at you with ghastly force from every word of his narrative; it is in the earth and in the air; and every mouth that opens among his characters, however little they may be involved in the mystery of the tale, only sends it thrilling with greater force through your heart. What a story, for instance, might he not have made out of the very eerie tales called "Roger Malvin's Burial," or "Rappacini's Daughter," if he had elaborated them with anything like the art shown in the "House of the Seven Gables"!

Hawthorne was quite aware of the slight ideal structure of his earlier and shorter tales. He himself criticised them with rare candour and subtlety, though not

with a fair appreciation of the promise of deeper power which they contained, in that preface to one of the editions of the "Twice-told Tales," to which I have already once referred :—

"At all events, there can be no harm in the Author's remarking that he rather wonders how the "Twice-told Tales" should have gained what vogue they did, than that it was so little and so gradual. They have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade—the coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion there is sentiment; and, even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author's touches have often an effect of tameness; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humour; the tenderest woman, one would suppose, will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos. With the foregoing characteristics, proper to the productions of a person in retirement (which happened to be the Author's category at the time), the book is devoid of others that we should quite as naturally look for. The sketches are not, it is hardly necessary to say, profound; but it is rather more remarkable that they so seldom, if ever, show any design on the writer's part to make them so. They have none of the abstruseness of idea, or obscurity of expression, which mark the written communications of a solitary mind within itself. They never need translation. It is, in fact, the style of a man of society. Every sentence, so far as it embodies thought or sensibility, may be understood and felt by anybody who will give himself the trouble to read it, and will take up the book in a proper mood. This statement of apparently opposite peculiarities leads us to a perception of what the sketches truly are. They are not the talk of a secluded man with his own mind and heart (had it been so, they could hardly have failed to be more deeply and permanently



valuable), but his attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world."

This passage contains some of the truest and finest touches in the way of literary self-criticism with which I am acquainted ; but it does not, as I said, do justice to the undeveloped germs of power in many of the pieces comprised in this and Hawthorne's other collections of short tales. It is true, indeed, that, throughout almost all he wrote, sentiment takes the place of passion, and it is not seldom true, though it by no means holds of the majority of his finished studies of character, that, in the place of "pictures of actual life, we have allegory not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver." But there is enough even in the early tales of which Hawthorne here speaks to prove that the allegorical turn which his tales are apt to take was not with him, as it often is, a sign of meagre or shallow imaginative endowments,—a proof that fancy predominated in him rather than genuine imagination.

When a man sits down professing to paint human life and character, and in place thereof succeeds only in representing abstract virtues, vices, passions, and the like, under human names, we may fairly say that with him the allegorical vein proves the general poverty of his spiritual blood. He has peeled off the outer surface where he professed to model the substance. But when, on the other hand, the same truth which by an ordinary intellect would be expressed in

a purely abstract form naturally takes shape in a man's mind under an imaginative clothing which savours of allegory, no inference of the kind is legitimate. In the one case the allegory is a degenerate romance, in the other it is a thought expressing itself in the language of the imagination. The weakness in the former case is measured by the inability of the imagination to see the broad chasm between the reality and the allegorical shadow. In the latter case there is no such inability, but the thought which would have entered an ordinary mind in a purely abstract form presents itself to this in the form of a distinct shadow-picture.

And it is a sign that Hawthorne's genius has not the weakness usually belonging to allegorists, that the longer a subject rests in his mind, the more certainly do the allegorical shadows of its first outline gather solidity of form and variety of colour, and gradually substantiate themselves into real though dimly-lighted figures. In the ideal situation as it first presents itself to the author's mind, the places of the human actors are perhaps occupied by appropriate symbols of some predominant sentiment or characteristic which each of the group subsequently embodies. If written down in that faint early form, the tale seems allegorical. But if allowed to lie by in the imagination, it deepens into a pallid dramatic situation; a body of human life and character gathers round, and clothes each of the ideal skeletons in the original plan, turning the faint allegory into a chapter of human experience. So clearly did Edgar Poe perceive this vein of genuine imaginative

power in Hawthorne's writings, even at a time when he had published only his shorter tales, that he boldly asserted,—in this, as I think, overleaping the truth,—that the conspicuously ideal scaffoldings of Hawthorne's stories were but the monstrous fruits of the bad transcendental atmosphere which he had breathed so long,—the sign of the Emersonian school of thought in which he had studied. “He is infinitely too fond of allegory,” said Edgar Poe, “and can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. This he will *not* do, for allegory is at war with the whole tone of his nature, which disports itself never so well as when escaping from the mysticism of his Goodman Browns and White Old Maids into the hearty, genial, but still Indian-summer sunshine of his Wakefields and Little Annie's Rambles. Indeed, his spirit of metaphor run mad is clearly imbibed from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for truth. He has not half the material for the exclusiveness of authorship that he possesses for its universality. He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humour, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity, and with these varied good qualities he has done *well* as a mystic. But is there any one of these qualities which should prevent his doing doubly well in a career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible, and comprehensible things? Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of the ‘Dial,’ and

throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of the 'North-American Review.' "

The caustic American critic was, I think, confusing two things in this brief summary of Hawthorne's qualifications and deficiencies. He saw that Hawthorne could produce the most skilful studies from real life, as, for instance—to take one amongst many—in his sketch of the old Apple Dealer; he saw also that almost all his tales proper embodied an idea or a truth, and he thought the former the natural bent of Hawthorne's mind, the latter the imported mannerism of a clique. But the truth is, that both are equally natural to him, the pale transparency of an idea being quite as essential to him in putting together a tale as an unlimited store of exciting emergencies is to Fenimore Cooper or G. P. R. James, or a picturesque episode in history to Sir Walter Scott. Hawthorne could never weave his studies of human nature into a continuous narrative, based on mere circumstantial incident and striking adventure. The constructive talent, probably the special tastes and interests, requisite for that kind of framework of a tale were not a part of his genius. He must have a ghostly centre of his own, or he could not write at all.

His power over his readers always arises from much the same cause as that of his own fanciful creation,—the minister who wore the black veil as a symbol of the veil which is on all hearts, and who startled men less because he was hidden from their view than because he made them aware of their own solitude. "Why do you tremble at *me alone*?" says the mild

old man on his death-bed, from beneath his black veil, and with the glimmering smile on his half-hidden lips; "tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled only from my black veil? What but the mystery which it obscurely typifies has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend, the lover to his best beloved, when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin, then deem me a monster for the symbol beneath which I have lived and died! I look around me, and lo! on every visage a black veil!" Hawthorne, with the pale melancholy smile that seems to be always on his lips, speaks from a somewhat similar solitude. Indeed I suspect the story was a kind of parable of his own experience.

But, though Hawthorne's imagination was a solitary and twilight one, there was nothing allegorical about his genius. If we want to find his power at the very highest, we must look to his instinctive knowledge of what we may call the laws, not exactly of *discordant* emotions, but of emotions which *ought* to be mutually exclusive, and which combine with the thrill and the shudder of disease. This is almost the antithesis of Allegory. And he makes his delineation of such "unblest unions" the more striking, because it stands out from a background of healthy life, of genial scenes and simple beauties, which renders the contrast the more thrilling. I have often heard the term "cobweby" applied to his romances; and their most

marking passages certainly cause the same sense of unwelcome shrinking to the spirit which a line of unexpected cobwebs suddenly drawn across the face causes physically when one enters a deserted but familiar room. Edgar Poe, indeed, is much fuller of uncanny terrors ; but then there is nothing in his writings of the healthy, simple, and natural background which gives sin and disease all its horror. It is the pure and severe New England simplicity which Hawthorne paints so delicately that brings out in full relief the adulterous mixture of emotions on which he spends his main strength. I might almost say that he has carried into human affairs the old Calvinistic type of imagination. The same strange combination of clear simplicity, high faith, and reverential reality, with a reluctant, but for that very reason intense and devouring, conviction of the large comprehensiveness of the Divine Damnation, which that grim creed taught its most honest believers to consider as the true trust in God's providence, Hawthorne copies into his pictures of human life. He presents us with a scene of pale severe beauty, full of truthful goodness, and then he uncovers in some one point of it a plague-spot, that, half-concealed as he keeps it, yet runs away with the imagination till one is scarcely conscious of anything else. Just as Calvinism, with all its noble features, can never keep its eyes off that one fact, as it thinks it, of God's calm foreknowledge of a widespread damnation ; and this gradually encroaches on the attention till the mind is utterly absorbed in the fascinating terror of the problem how to combine the

clashing emotions of love and horror which its image of Him inspires;—so Hawthorne's finest tales, with all the simplicity of their general outline, never detain you long from some uneasy mixture of emotions which only disease can combine in the same subject, until at last you ask for nothing but the disentangling of the infected web.

There are many illustrations of this peculiarity of Hawthorne's genius in his earlier and shorter tales. In one of them he exclaims, and it is the key to his genius, "Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blazes of the infernal regions." The tale in which Hawthorne makes this remark, "*Rappacini's Daughter*," itself exemplifies in a somewhat fanciful but striking form this constant bent of his imagination. Dr. Rappacini is a professor of medical science in the University of Padua. He has devoted himself to the study of deadly poisons, and learnt how to infuse them so subtly into both animal and vegetable natures as to render that which would be fatal in the ordinary way, essential to life and health, and even productive of unusual lustre and bloom. Hawthorne has evidently based his tale on the physiological fact—which, at least in the case of arsenic, is well attested—that a malignant poison, if gradually administered, may at length become a condition of life and conducive to beauty. Dr. Rappacini has filled his garden with flowers so poisonous that he himself dare not touch them, and can scarcely venture to breathe the air around them. But the life of his

daughter Beatrice has been imbued and fed with the same poisons which give so rich a bloom and so sweet but deadly a perfume to these rare plants ; and to her they are health and added loveliness. Her breath is instantly fatal to the insect or the butterfly that drinks it in, and even her touch is deadly. But her heart is stainless and noble, and she shudders herself at the malign influences which she involuntarily puts forth as insects fall dead around her. Her great beauty fascinates one of the students, whose lodging looks out above this strange garden ; and by Rappacini's skill, exercised without the young man's knowledge, he is gradually imbued with the same poisons which enter so deeply into the life and constitution of Beatrice. The point and art of this eerie tale lie in the conflict of emotions which Beatrice's true spiritual beauty and malignant physical influences raise in the mind of her lover, filling him with a passion blended equally of love and horror ; and in the description of the despair with which he discovers that the same malignant influences are already part of himself.

The same tendency of imagination, in perhaps quite as characteristic, but in a far more unpleasant form, is shown in the tale called the "Birth-Mark," which turns on the morbid horror inspired by a slight birth-mark on the cheek of a beautiful woman in the mind of her husband, who is at the same time passionately attached to her and bent on eradicating it. This tale has no imaginative beauty, and is only remarkable for the diseased mixture of emotions which it depicts. Again, in the tale concerning "The Man with the Snake in



his Bosom," and "Young Goodman Brown," with all the most remarkable of Hawthorne's shorter tales, the same prominent feature, in some form or other, may be discerned.

But it is in the more elaborate tales that Hawthorne has most scope, at once for the relieving elements which these morbid interests, if they are to be artistically treated at all, especially require, and for the fuller development and *justification*, so to say, of emotions so subtle and unhealthy. In the "Scarlet Letter," he has a subject naturally so painful as exactly to suit his genius. He treats it with perfect delicacy, for his attention is turned to the morbid anatomy of the relations which have originated in the sin of adultery, rather than to the sin itself. There are two points on which Hawthorne concentrates his power in this remarkable book. The first is the false position of the minister, who gains fresh reverence and popularity as the very fruit of the passionate anguish with which his heart is consumed. Frantic with the stings of unacknowledged guilt, he is yet taught by those very stings to understand the hearts and stir the consciences of others. His character is a pre-Raphaelite picture of the tainted motives which fill a weak but fine and sensitive nature when placed in such a position; of self-hatred quite too passionate to conquer self-love; of a quailing conscience smothered into insane cravings for blasphemy; of the exquisite pain of gratified ambition conscious of its shameful falsehood. The second point on which Hawthorne concentrates his power is the delineation of anomalous characteristics in the child

who is the offspring of this sinful passion. He gives her an inheritance of a lawless, mischievous, and elfish nature, not devoid of strong affections, but delighting to probe the very sorest points of her mother's heart, induced in part by some mysterious fascination to the subject, in part by wanton mischief. The scarlet A which is the brand of her mother's shame, is the child's delight. She will not approach her mother unless the A be on her bosom; and the unnatural complication of emotions thus excited in Hester Prynne's heart presents one of the most characteristic features of the book, and are painfully engraved on the reader's mind.

The scene of most marvellous power which the book contains contrives to draw to a focus all the many clashing affections portrayed. Mr. Dimmesdale, the unhappy minister, eager to invent vain penances in expiation of the guilt which he dares not avow, creeps out at midnight in his canonical robe to stand for an hour on the scaffold on which Hester and her child had been pilloried years before. It is the night when many are watching by the dying-bed of the governor of Massachusetts, and one of the minister's reverend colleagues, who has been praying with the governor, passes under the scaffold, lantern in hand. In his nervous and excited mood, Dimmesdale almost addresses him aloud, and then, paralysed by dread and his limbs stiffened by cold, it occurs to him that he will never be able to descend the steps of the scaffold, and that morning will break to show him there to all his revering flock:—

“Morning would break, and find him there. The neighbour-

hood would begin to rouse itself. The earliest riser, coming forth in the dim twilight, would perceive a vaguely-defined figure aloft on the place of shame; and half crazed betwixt alarm and curiosity, would go knocking from door to door, summoning all the people to behold the ghost—as he needs must think it—of some defunct transgressor. A dusky tumult would flap its wings from one house to another. Then—the morning light still waxing stronger—old patriarchs would rise up in great haste, each in his flannel gown, and matronly dames without pausing to put off their night gear. The whole tribe of decorous personages, who had never heretofore been seen with a single hair of their heads awry, would start into public view with the disorder of a nightmare in their aspects. Old Governor Bellingham would come grimly forth, with his King James' ruff fastened askew; and Mistress Hibbins, with some twigs of the forest clinging to her skirts, and looking sourer than ever, as having hardly got a wink of sleep after her night ride; and good Father Wilson too, after spending half the night at a death-bed, and liking ill to be disturbed thus early out of his dreams about the glorified saints. Hither likewise would come the elders and deacons of Mr. Dimmesdale's church, and the young virgins who so idolised their minister, and had made a shrine for him in their white bosoms; which now, by the by, in their hurry and confusion, they would scantily have given themselves time to cover with their kerchiefs. All people, in a word, would come stumbling over their thresholds, and turning up their amazed and horror-stricken visages around the scaffold. Whom would they discern there with the red eastern light upon his brow? Whom, but the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, half-frozen to death, overwhelmed with shame, and standing where Hester Prynne had stood!

Carried away by the grotesque horror of this picture, the minister, unawares, and to his own infinite alarm, burst into a great peal of laughter. It was immediately responded to by a light, airy, childish laugh, in which, with a thrill of the heart—but he knew not whether of exquisite pain, or pleasure as acute—he recognised the tones of little Pearl.

‘Pearl! Little Pearl!’ cried he, after a moment’s pause; then, suppressing his voice, ‘Hester! Hester Prynne! Are you there?’ ‘Yes; it is Hester Prynne!’ she replied, in a tone of surprise; and the minister heard her footsteps approaching from the side-walk, along which she had been passing. ‘It is I, and my little Pearl.’ ‘Whence come you, Hester?’ asked the minister. ‘What sent you hither?’ ‘I have been watching at a death-bed,’ answered Hester Prynne; ‘at Governor Winthrop’s death-bed, and have taken his measure for a robe, and am now going homeward to my dwelling.’ ‘Come up hither, Hester, thou and little Pearl,’ said the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale. ‘Ye have both been here before, but I was not with you. Come up hither once again, and we will stand all three together.’

She silently ascended the steps, and stood on the platform, holding little Pearl by the hand. The minister felt for the child’s other hand, and took it. The moment that he did so, there came what seemed a tumultuous rush of new life, other life than his own, pouring like a torrent into his heart, and hurrying through all his veins, as if the mother and the child were communicating their vital warmth to his half-torpid system. The three formed an electric chain.

‘Minister!’ whispered little Pearl. ‘What wouldst thou say, child?’ asked Mr. Dimmesdale. ‘Wilt thou stand here with mother and me, to-morrow noontide?’ inquired Pearl. ‘Nay; not so, my little Pearl,’ answered the minister; for, with the new energy of the moment, all the dread of public exposure, that had so long been the anguish of his life, had returned upon him; and he was already trembling at the conjunction in which, with a strange joy, nevertheless, he now found himself,—‘not so, my child. I shall indeed stand with thy mother and thee one other day, but not to-morrow.’

Pearl laughed, and attempted to pull away her hand. But the minister held it fast. ‘A moment longer, my child!’ said he. ‘But wilt thou promise,’ asked Pearl, ‘to take my hand, and mother’s hand, to-morrow noontide?’”

At this moment a sudden meteoric light flashes across the sky, and lights up the scaffold; after describing it the tale proceeds:—

“There was a singular circumstance that characterised Mr. Dimmesdale’s psychological state at this moment. All the time that he gazed upward to the zenith, he was nevertheless perfectly aware that little Pearl was pointing her finger towards old Roger Chillingworth, who stood at no great distance from the scaffold. The minister appeared to see him with the same glance that discerned the miraculous letter. To his features, as to all other objects, the meteoric light imparted a new expression; or it might well be that the physician was not careful then, as at all other times, to hide the malevolence with which he looked upon his victim. Certainly, if the meteor kindled up the sky, and disclosed the earth, with an awfulness that admonished Hester Prynne and the clergyman of the day of judgment, then might Roger Chillingworth have passed with them for the arch-fiend, standing there with a smile and scowl to claim his own. So vivid was the expression, or so intense the minister’s perception of it, that it seemed still to remain painted on the darkness, after the meteor had vanished, with an effect as if the street and all things else were at once annihilated.

‘Who is that man, Hester?’ gasped Mr. Dimmesdale, overcome with terror. ‘I shiver at him! Dost thou know the man? I hate him, Hester!’

She remembered her oath, and was silent.

‘I tell thee my soul shivers at him!’ muttered the minister again. ‘Who is he? Who is he? Canst thou do nothing for me? I have a nameless horror of the man!’

‘Minister,’ said little Pearl, ‘I can tell thee who he is.’

‘Quickly, then, child!’ said the minister, bending his ear close to her lips. ‘Quickly! and as low as thou canst whisper.’

Pearl mumbled something into his ear that sounded, indeed, like human language, but was only such gibberish as children

may be heard amusing themselves with by the hour together. At all events, if it involved any secret information in regard to old Roger Chillingworth, it was in a tongue unknown to the erudite clergyman, and did but increase the bewilderment of his mind. The elvish child then laughed aloud."

This strange vigil, the grim hysteric humour of the minister, the proud and silent fortitude of Hester, the mocking laughter of the child as she detects her unknown father's cowardice, together make as weird-like a tangle of human elements as ever bubbled together in a witches' caldron. Yet this scene, though probably the most powerful which Hawthorne ever painted, scarcely exemplifies his uncanny passion of awakening the most mutually-repellent feelings at the same moment towards the same person so characteristically as many of his other tales.

In the most striking chapter of the "House of the Seven Gables," Hawthorne makes Judge Pyncheon, who has died in his chair from a sudden effusion of blood, holding his still ticking watch in his hand, a subject at once for awe and scorn. He recalls all the judge's engagements for the day,—the bank-meeting at which he was to take the chair,—the business appointment he was to keep,—the private purchases he was to make,—the little act of charity which he had thought of, time and purse permitting,—the half-formal call on his physician concerning some trifling symptoms of indisposition,—the political dinner to discuss the election of the next State Governor; and then he taunts the judge with his forgetfulness. He had resolved to spend only half-an-hour in this house.

“Half-an-hour! Why, judge, it is already two hours by your own undeviatingly accurate chronometer. Glance your eye down on it and see. Ah! he will not give himself the trouble either to bend his head or elevate his hand, so as to bring the faithful time-keeper within his range of vision. Time all at once appears to have become a matter of no moment with the judge!” And so Hawthorne goes on through the list of his engagements, reminding him separately of each as the time comes for it, recalling to the dead man the importance he had attached to it when he made his plans in the morning. The private dinner would, in all probability, determine the next election,—and Judge Pyncheon was a candidate, and with rare chances of success. “Make haste, then; do your part! . . . Drink a glass or two of that noble wine!—make your pledges in as low a whisper as you will—and you rise up from table virtually governor of the glorious old State—Governor Pyncheon of Massachusetts! And is there no potent and exhilarating cordial in a certainty like this? It has been the grand purpose of half your lifetime to obtain it. Now, when there needs little more than to signify your acceptance, why do you sit so lumpishly in your great-grandfather’s old chair, as if preferring it to the gubernatorial one?” Thus Hawthorne goes on throughout the twenty-four hours during which the judge’s body remains undiscovered,—mingling with the most powerful picture of the supernatural side of death, which he never ceases to keep vividly before us, the feelings that cluster round petty business, the sarcasms that might sting the sen-

sitive, the urgency that might hasten the dilatory, the incentives that would spur the ambitious, flinging them all in cold irony at the corpse with an eerie effect that only Hawthorne could produce.

But the most characteristic instance of Hawthorne's power in studying combinations of emotions that are as it were at once abhorrent to nature and true to life, is in "Transformation." The one powerful scene in that distended work is the scene of crime. The young Tuscan Count Donatello,—the "natural man" of the book, who is rumoured to be a descendant of an ancient Faun, and described in the opening of the tale as possessed only of the happy spontaneous life of the natural creatures, but who is afterwards awakened to the higher responsibilities and life of man by his remorse for an impulsive crime,—has fallen in love with Miriam, a lady artist of warm and passionate nature, high powers, and mysterious origin. This young lady is pursued by some half-madman, half-demon, who from some (unexplained) connection with her previous life has power to torment her by his threats to the very verge of unsettling her reason. Walking with Donatello, one moonlight night, at a little distance from their party, on the verge of the Tarpeian rock, this tormenting being is discovered, dogging her footsteps as usual, under the shadow of an archway. Donatello seizes him, holds him over the precipice, catches Miriam's eye, reads in it eager and fierce assent to the act he is meditating, and drops him down; there is a dead thump on the stones below and all is over. Up to this instant Miriam had felt



nothing but pity for her young lover. Now for the first time, in this hideous moment, horror and love are born together in her breast, and the monstrous birth, the delirium of love born in blood, is thus powerfully described ;—except, by the way, that Miriam certainly never addressed Donatello at such a moment as “Oh, friend !” either “with heavy richness of meaning” or otherwise, and that this is a sentimental blot on Hawthorne’s picture.

“‘Did you not mean that he should die?’ sternly asked Donatello, still in the glow of that intelligence which passion had developed in him. ‘There was short time to weigh the matter; but he had his trial in that breath or two, while I held him over the cliff, and his sentence in that one glance, when your eyes responded to mine! Say that I have slain him against your will—say that he died without your whole consent—and in another breath, you shall see me lying beside him.’ ‘Oh, never!’ cried Miriam. ‘My one own friend! Never, never, never!’ She turned to him—the guilty, blood-stained, lonely woman—she turned to her fellow-criminal, the youth so lately innocent, whom she had drawn into her doom. She pressed him close, close to her bosom, with a clinging embrace that brought their two hearts together, till the horror and agony of each was combined into one emotion, and that a kind of rapture. ‘Yes, Donatello, you speak the truth!’ said she; ‘my heart consented to what you did. We two slew yonder wretch. The deed knots us together for time and eternity, like the coil of a serpent!’ They threw one other glance at the heap of death below, to assure themselves that it was there; so like a dream was the whole thing. Then they turned from that fatal precipice, and came out of the courtyard, arm in arm, heart in heart. Instinctively, they were heedful not to sever themselves so much as a pace or two from one another, for fear of the terror and deadly chill that would thenceforth wait for them in solitude. Their deed—the crime which

Donatello wrought, and Miriam accepted on the instant—had wreathed itself, as she said, like a serpent, in inextricable links about both their souls, and drew them into one by its terrible contractile power. It was closer than a marriage-bond. So intimate, in those first moments, was the union that it seemed as if their new sympathy annihilated all other ties, and that they were released from the chain of humanity; a new sphere, a special law, had been created for them alone. The world could not come near them; they were safe! . . . ‘Oh, friend!’ cried Miriam, so putting her soul into that word that it took a heavy richness of meaning, and seemed never to have been spoken before,—‘oh, friend, are you conscious, as I am, of this companionship that knits our heart-strings together?’ ‘I feel it, Miriam,’ said Donatello. ‘We draw one breath; we live one life!’ ‘Only yesterday,’ continued Miriam; ‘nay, only a short half-hour ago, I shivered in an icy solitude. No friendship, no sisterhood, could come near enough to keep the warmth within my heart. In an instant, all is changed! There can be no more loneliness!’ ‘None, Miriam!’ said Donatello. ‘None, my beautiful one!’ responded Miriam, gazing in his face, which had taken a higher, almost an heroic aspect from the strength of passion. ‘None, my innocent one! Surely, it is no crime that we have committed. One wretched and worthless life has been sacrificed, to cement two other lives for evermore.’ ‘For evermore, Miriam!’ said Donatello; ‘cemented with his blood!’ The young man started at the word which he had himself spoken; it may be that it brought home, to the simplicity of his imagination, what he had not before dreamed of—the ever-increasing loathsomeness of a union that consists in guilt. Cemented with blood, which would corrupt and grow more noisome for ever and for ever, but bind them not the less strictly for that! ‘Forget it! Cast it all behind you!’ said Miriam, detecting, by her sympathy, the pang that was in his heart. ‘The deed has done its office, and has no existence any more.’ They flung the past behind them, as she counselled, or else distilled from it a fiery intoxication, which sufficed to carry them triumphantly through

those first moments of their doom. For guilt has its moment of rapture too. The foremost result of a broken law is ever an ecstatic sense of freedom. And thus there exhaled upward (out of their dark sympathy, at the base of which lay a human corpse) a bliss, or an insanity, which the unhappy pair imagined to be well worth the sleepy innocence that was for ever lost to them. As their spirits rose to the solemn madness of the occasion, they went onward—not stealthily, not fearfully—but with a stately gait and aspect. Passion lent them (as it does to meaner shapes) its brief nobility of carriage. They trode through the streets of Rome as if they too were among the majestic and guilty shadows that, from ages long gone by, have haunted the blood-stained city.”

This is very finely conceived and yet revolting. Have I not reason for saying, that Hawthorne’s chief power lies in the delineation of unnatural alliances of feeling, which are yet painfully real,—of curdling emotions that may mix for a moment, but shrink apart again quickly as running water from clotted blood?

But it would be very unjust to Hawthorne to represent him as in any degree addicted, like Edgar Poe, to the invention of monstrosities and horrors. I only mean that his genius naturally leads him to the analysis and representation of certain outlying moral anomalies, which are not the anomalies of ordinary evil and sin, but have a certain chilling unnaturalness of their own. But under Hawthorne’s treatment these anomalies are only the subtle flaws or passionate taints of natures full of fine elements; they are never superlatives of iniquity and abomination, like Edgar Poe’s. They are the dark spots in a fine picture, never the

very substance of the whole. There is, for instance, every palliation which a charitable imagination can invent for Hester's sin and Dimmesdale's cowardice in the "Scarlet Letter;" and even the child's elfish wantonness, though in some degree preternatural, is not demoniacal, but the mere lawless taint in an otherwise warm and open heart. So too in "Transformation" there is every excuse that circumstances can give to the crime which Donatello commits and Miriam sanctions;—after the first moment of mad excitement is over, it fills them with unspeakable anguish; it rouses all the tender devotion of the woman in Miriam for the man who had thus stained his conscience under the impulse of love to her; it awakens the sleeping soul of Donatello;—and the book is meant to record their uninterrupted upward progress from that moment. Moreover, in the two other characters we find a peaceful contrast to the turbid hearts of the sinful lovers. Neither in this nor in any other tale does Hawthorne cast any slur on human nature. He loves to picture it in its highest and tenderest aspects. And when he delineates what is revolting, one of the main elements that makes it so revolting is the Manichean incarceration of some noble and half-angelic affection in a malignant body of evil, from which it vainly seeks to be divorced.

This bent of Hawthorne's genius is no doubt in great degree determined by the lonely wistfulness of his mind. Even his *imagination* is inquisitive and—if I may call it what he calls it himself in the "Blithedale Romance"—rather *prying* than ardent. It is curious

to find that Hawthorne was a descendent of the "witch-judge,"—the Hawthorne of whom Longfellow introduced a sketch into his New England tragedies. One might fancy that Hawthorne had inherited not a little of the eeriness of the spiritual inquisitor without any touch of his cruelty,—except so far as a passionless curiosity which is very little agitated by sympathy, even where it is analysing painful subjects, may popularly (and very unjustly) be confused with cruelty. But it is not only the inquisitorial side of Hawthorne's cold fancy which seems to connect him with his ancestor the "witch-judge." There seems to have been in him a considerable vein of what would probably very unjustly be called superstition,—*i. e.*, a special attraction towards the morbid side of mental phenomena, with, perhaps, an undue tendency to credulity. As to the credulity, I am not sure. It may well be that Hawthorne believed no more of the so-called *science* of mesmeric and spiritualistic phenomena than the most acute and incredulous men of his society. But that he was specially fascinated by these morbid phenomena, as by all morbid phenomena of human nature, is proved by a vast number of passages in his various note-books, as well as by the subjects of his novels.

His notes are full of suggestions for imaginative inquisitions into morbid subjects. In one page we find a suggestion, more cynical and less preternatural than usual, that two persons might make their wills in each other's favour, and then wait impatiently for the death of the other, till each was informed that the long-desired event had taken place, and hastening to be pres-

ent at the other's funeral, they might meet each other in perfect health; in another page we find noted down, "Curious to imagine what murmurings and discontent would be excited if any of the great so-called calamities of human beings were to be abolished,—as, for instance, death;"—again we have a suggestion for a new sort of reading of Boccaccio's story of Isabel, that a girl, not knowing her lover to be dead and buried in her own garden, might yet feel an indescribable impulse of attraction towards the flowers growing out of his grave, might find them of admirable splendour, beauty, and perfume, and rejoice in keeping them in her bosom and scenting her room with them. Again, on another page we have a suggested sketch of a man who tries to be happy in love, but who cannot really give his heart, or prevent the affair from seeming a pure dream;—in domestic life, in politics, in every sphere it is to be the same,—he is to seem a patriot, and care nothing really for his country, only *try* to care; he is to seem the kindest of sons and brothers, but feel the whole relation unreal; in a word, he is to be wholly "detached" from life, like a Roman Catholic monk or nun, but without that life in another world after which they aim. These are only a very few specimens of the fascination with which Hawthorne's fancy dwells on morbid psychology as his natural subject. There are but few pages in his Note-books which do not afford examples of the same thing. Hawthorne seems to illustrate his contemporary and friend Dr. Holmes's theory that we are each of us a sort of physiological and psychological omnibus for bringing back our ancestors in new shapes and under

different conditions to this earth. The "witch-judge," associating himself perhaps with some more literary ancestor of Hawthorne's, reappeared in this most original of American novelists. Hawthorne was a novelist *because* he was an intellectual and moral inquisitor. "Inquisitor and novelist," would describe him even better than "novelist and inquisitor,"—always carefully expelling, of course, all notion of torture from the inquisitorial character of his imagination.

Hawthorne's genius, then, is fertile, but in a cold and restless way. It is used more to help him to explore mysteries than in obedience to the glowing creative impulse that cannot choose but paint. He states to himself a problem, and sets his imagination to work to solve it. How was it the woman felt who wore publicly the symbol of her own sin and shame fancifully embroidered on her bosom? What would be the state of mind of one who had unhappily killed another, and could never clearly determine in his own conscience whether his *will* had consented to the deed or not? What would be the result of a wrongful life-imprisonment on a soft æsthetic nature made for the enjoyment of the beautiful? How would a sin of passion work on a healthy, innocent, natural man of unawakened spirit? These are the kind of hypotheses on which Hawthorne's imagination works; and from the nature of the case, images summoned up in obedience to such questionings cannot always be of a very wholesome kind. The problems that Hawthorne starts are usually connected with the deepest mysteries of the human mind and conscience; and the imagination

which attempts to keep pace with the inquisitive intellect cannot but paint strange and thrilling anomalies in reply to its queries.

“That cold tendency,” says Mr. Coverdale, the hero of the “Blithedale Romance,” who has many points of intellectual affinity with its author,—“that cold tendency between instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into people’s passions and impulses, appeared to have gone far towards unhumanising my heart.” I do not suppose that it went far, or any way at all, towards unhumanising Hawthorne’s heart, which was evidently tender. But no doubt, he is led by the speculative bias of his mind to steep his imagination in *arcana* on which it is scarcely good to gaze at all.

It is remarkable, and perhaps a symptom of the same imaginative constitution, that while Hawthorne has the most eager desire to penetrate the secret attitudes of minds painfully or anomalously situated, he has little or no interest in picturing the exact combination of circumstances which brought them into these attitudes. His imagination is the very converse of De Foe’s. De Foe seizes the outer fact with the most vivid force; indirectly only, by the very force and minuteness of his conception of the visible circumstances, actions, and gestures he narrates, do you get at the inward mind of his characters. Hawthorne, on the contrary, is often positively anxious to *suppress* all distinct account of the actual facts which have given rise to his ideal situations. He wishes to save the mental impression from being swallowed up, so to say, in the interest of



the outward facts and events. He sees that people of a matter-of-fact turn of mind attach more value to knowing the exciting causes than to knowing the state of mind which results. If they hear what seems to them an insufficient cause for a heroine's misery, they set her down as feeble-minded, and give up their interest in her fate. If they hear a *too* sufficient cause, they say she deserved all she suffered, and for that reason discard her from their sympathies. Hawthorne saw the difficulty of inventing facts that would exactly hit the shade of feeling that he desired to excite in his readers' minds, and so he often refuses to detail the facts distinctly at all. He often gives us our choice of several sets of facts which might be adequate to the results, declines to say which he himself prefers, and insists only on the attitude of mind produced.

Thus, in the "Blithedale Romance," he preludes a far from explanatory or lucid conversation with this mystifying sentence, "I hardly could make out an intelligible sentence on either side. What I seem to remember I yet suspect may have been patched together by my fancy in brooding over the matter afterwards." Again, in another part of the same book, "The details of the interview that followed being unknown to me, while notwithstanding it would be a pity quite to lose the picturesqueness of the situation, I shall attempt to sketch it mainly from fancy, although with some general grounds of surmise in regard to the old man's feelings." But he carried this preference for delineating states of mind, and obscurely suggest-

ing the class of facts which may have given rise to them, to the furthest point in his last novel, "*Transformation*." "Owing, it may be," he tells us, in a chapter justly headed "*Fragmentary Sentences*," at a critical juncture in the tale, "to this moral estrangement,—this chill remoteness of their position,—there have come to us but a few vague whisperings of what passed in Miriam's interview that afternoon with the sinister personage who had dogged her footsteps ever since her visit to the catacomb. In weaving these mystic utterances into a continuous scene, we undertake a task resembling in its perplexity that of gathering up and piecing together the fragments of a letter which has been torn and scattered to the winds. Many words of deep significance,—many entire sentences, and these probably the most important ones,—have flown too far on the winged breeze to be recovered. If we insert our own conjectural amendments, we may perhaps give a purport utterly at variance with the true one." And then he continues, "Of so much we are sure, that there seemed to be a sadly mysterious fascination in the influence of this ill-omened person over Miriam; it was such as beasts and reptiles of subtle and evil natures sometimes exercise over their victims. . . . Yet let us trust there may have been no crime in Miriam, but only one of those fatalities which are among the insoluble riddles propounded to mortal comprehension—the fatal doom by which every crime is made to be the agony of many innocent persons, as well as of the single guilty one." In other words, Hawthorne wishes us to picture a mind per-

turbed, flushed, on the verge of despair, but does not wish us to know how far the exciting causes had involved her in real guilt, or merely in misery. It is not essential, he thinks, to the purpose of the book, which is rather to trace the effects of the subsequent guilt on the relation between Miriam and Donatello than to develop fully the previous character of the woman who draws the poor young Count into crime. As far as regards Miriam, the problem set himself by the author in this book is only to delineate the influence exerted over her heart by Donatello's plunge into guilt on her behalf. He thinks it enough to indicate that she who led Donatello into guilt was either herself guilty, or at least intimately imbued with all the infectious fever of a guilty atmosphere. More is not essential to the author's purpose, and more he will not tell us. He seems to hint, perhaps truly, that the chasm between guilt and wretchedness in a woman's mind is not always so wide as in a man's; and that, at all events, there is as much power in any deeply roused affection to extricate her from the one as from the other. For like reasons, I suppose, the end of the tale is as shadowy as the beginning. The *transformation* is accomplished: the Faun is no longer a Faun; and all the author contemplated is therefore attained. The wreath of mist which hangs over Miriam's past is allowed also to settle over her own and Donatello's future. The problem has been solved in the dissolving colours of two dimly-outlined minds. And their earthly destiny is nothing to the reader; to know it might even divert his attention from the artist's true

purpose, and concentrate it on the *dénouement* of a commonplace story.

This predominance of moral colouring over the definite forms of actual fact in Hawthorne's novels is to me, I confess, unsatisfactory. And the degree to which it is absent or prevails in his several works, seems to me a fair measure of their relative artistic worth. The "Scarlet Letter," in which there is by far the most solid basis of fact, is, I think, also considerably the finest and most powerful of his efforts. The "House of the Seven Gables," in itself nearly a perfect work of art, is yet composed of altogether thinner materials. Yet the details are worked up with so much care and finish,—the whole external scenery of this, as well as of the "Scarlet Letter," is so sharply defined, so full of the clear air of New England life,—that one can bear better the subtle moral colouring and anatomy with which they both abound. In the "Blithedale Romance" I observe the first tendency to shroud certain portions of the narrative in an intentional veil, and to attempt to paint a distinct moral *expression* without giving a distinct outline of fact. The effect is powerful, but vague and not satisfying. The figures wander vagrant-like through the imagination of the reader. They seem to have no distinct place of their own assigned to them. You know what sort of characters you have beheld, but not when and under what circumstances you have beheld them. In "Transformation" these defects are at their maximum; and the evil is exaggerated by the mass of general padding—artistic criticisms, often powerful, and always subtle,

upon Italian art;—puffs of the works of American sculptors;—silly attacks upon nude figures, and the like,—which distend, alloy, and ungracefully speckle the ideal tenor of the tale.

Both the novels and the note-books testify to their author's melancholy, though hardly melancholy of a deep order. It is the melancholy of a man with a rather slow flow of blood in his veins, and almost a horror of action, rather than any deep melancholy, which speaks in him. He is always sensible, but always apart from the rest of the world. There is a sort of capillary repulsion between his mind and that of the society in which he mixes, and this it is which gives a slight gloom to the general tone of his observations. "The world is so sad and solemn," he says, "that things meant in jest are liable by an overpowering influence to become dreadful earnest,—gaily dressed fantasies turning to ghostly and black-clad images, of themselves." This was, no doubt, an observation founded on considerable experience of his own mental life, and any one who knows well his minor tales will be able at once to verify it from them. But there is very little of deep pain in either his criticisms of life or his pictures of it. He pictured real anguish, but more as an anatomist would lay bare a convulsive movement of the nerves, than as a poet would express passion. You feel that you are reading a *study* of human pain, rather than feeling the throb of the pain itself. The melancholy is the meditative and microscopic melancholy of a curious and speculative intelligence; there is little of that imaginative

*sympathy* with pain which is at the heart of all true tragedy.

Hawthorne's humour is partly of the same root as his melancholy, springing from slow, close, inquisitive scrutiny of the paradoxes of life,—the humour which is quite as much true criticism as true humour. Take, for example, this observation on one of his children :—“One of the children drawing a cow on the black board says, ‘I’ll kick this leg out a little more,’ *a very happy energy of expression*, completely indentifying herself with the cow ; *or perhaps as the cow’s creator, conscious of full power over its movements.*” Or take the remark, “There is a kind of ludicrous unfitness in the idea of a venerable rose-bush . . . apple trees, on the other hand, grow old without reproach.” Or again, take the following, apparently written at a time when his wife was away, and he had no servant to look after his house :—“The washing of dishes does seem to me the most absurd and unsatisfactory business that I ever undertook. If, when once washed, they would remain clean for ever and ever (which they ought in all reason to do, considering how much trouble it is) there would be less occasion to grumble ; but *no sooner is it done than it requires to be done again.* On the whole, I have come to the resolution not to use more than one dish at each meal.” Or this, on a piece of boiled beef which he had boiled himself at great pains and trouble :—“I am at this moment superintending the corned beef, which has been on the fire, as it seems to me, ever since the beginning of time, and shows no symptom of being done before the crack

of doom. . . . The corned beef is exquisitely done, and as tender as a young lady's heart, all owing to my skilful cookery. . . . To say the truth, I look upon it as such a masterpiece in its way that it seems irreverential to eat it. Things on which so much thought and labour are bestowed should surely be immortal." His humour arises, as it seems to me, in all these cases from the magnifying glass under which he views a somewhat minute phenomenon, till we see its characteristics exaggerated and caricatured in relation to the proportions of ordinary life, and partly also from the humorous but determined resistance which his mind offers to every attempt to subdue it to uncongenial habits. Thus he says elsewhere, "I went to George Hillard's office, and he spoke with immitigable resolution of the necessity of my going to dine with Longfellow before returning to Concord; but I have an almost miraculous power of escaping from necessities of this kind. *Destiny itself has often been worsted in the attempt to get me out to dinner,*" which strikes me as a stroke of true humour, and true self-knowledge, all in one. His own shy, solitary nature was so averse to any attempt to assimilate it to the temper of ordinary society, that it might truly be said that destiny itself had failed in the attempt to get him to dine out like other folks, just as the most solid masonry often fails to crush a flower, and will even be rent asunder by the upward growth of a tender plant. But besides the truth of the application to himself, there is real humour in the conception of Destiny as trying to get any man "out to dinner." It really is what Destiny

seems oftenest to insist upon, and to succeed in, in these days, in spite of enormous obstacles. Hawthorne seldom displayed his humour more finely than in thus depicting the same Destiny which, in the Greek drama, devotes itself to the most sublime tasks, as engaging itself in this flaccid, and yet in some senses far *more* closely-knit, nineteenth century, in the ignoble task of bringing an irresistible pressure to bear in order to get men to go out to dinner !

The most distinguishing deficiency in Hawthorne's mind, which is also in close connection with its highest power, is his complete want of sympathy not only with the world of voluntary action, but with the next thing to action, namely, the world of impulsive passion. With exceedingly rare exceptions,—the scene of crime and passion which I have quoted from "Transformation" is the only exception I can recall,—the highest power of Hawthorne is all spent on the delineation of *chronic* suffering or sentiment, in which all desire to act on others is in a measure paralysed. He likes to get past the rapids any way he can ;—as we have seen, he not seldom introduces you to his tale with only the distant rush of them still audible behind you, his delight being to trace the more lasting perturbations which they effect for winding miles below. But what he does paint for you, he likes to study thoroughly ; he loves to get beneath the surface, to sound the deeper and mysterious pools, measure the power of the fretted waters, and map carefully out the sandy shallows. The result is necessarily a considerable limitation in the field of his genius. The excitement which other writers



find in delineating the swaying fortunes of an active career, he is—I will not say *obliged* to find, for of course the positive capacity of his genius, not its incapacity for other fields, leads him in this direction—but he is obliged to find *only* in curious and often painful pictures of unhealthy sentiment.

This is what circles so closely the range of Hawthorne's characters. They are necessarily very limited both in number and in moral attitude. We have but two studies, in his tales, of characters with any active bent—Hollingsworth in the "Blithedale Romance," and Phœbe in the "House of the Seven Gables." Both are carefully drawn, but both are far slighter sketches, and more evidently taken from observation only, than his other characters. His nearest approach to the delineation of impulsive passion is seen in the sketch of Zenobia in the "Blithedale Romance," and of Miriam in "Transformation." But in neither case is it real impulse to act on others which he draws well; it is rather the turbid tossing of a rich mind ill at ease with itself, and casting about for sympathy and help. The characters which he draws most completely,—though they are not always the pleasantest,—are those which, like Mr. Coverdale in the "Blithedale Romance," and Holgrave in the "House of the Seven Gables," have "no impulse to help or to hinder," caring only "to look on, to analyse, to explain matters to themselves." Clifford too, in the latter tale,—who evidently represents the sensitive and æsthetic side of the author's own mind, "that squeamish love of the beautiful" (to use his own expressive phrase) which is in him, when

stripped of that cold contemplative individuality which seems to me to be at the centre of Hawthorne's literary genius and personality,—is a fine study.

But one criticism more. The moral ideal which Hawthorne keeps before himself and his readers throughout his works is, on the whole, not only pure but noble. It is defective, however, as we might expect, on the same side on which his genius seems to fail. He was, in political and social conviction, a democratic quietist; one might almost say a fatalist. Was it not a part of this fatalistic disposition to encourage the cultivated and thinking portion of society to resign to the masses the duty of forming the political judgment of his nation, and to permit himself to be quietly sucked in by that fatally fascinating and overmastering tide swaying the Will of the democracy? However this may be, in political and social life, he was one who deprecated all spasmodic reforms, and attached little value to any reformatory efforts, except as the indispensable conditions of generous hopes and youthful aspirations. Speaking of such an experiment of social reform, he said, "After all, let us acknowledge it wise, if not more sagacious, to follow out one's day-dream to its natural consummation, although, if the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure." Again he said, in another tale, and with much of true moral insight, though it be the one-sided moral insight of the quietist recluse, "the haughty faith with which he [the enthusiastic practical reformer] began life would be well bartered for a far humbler one at its

close, in discerning that man's best-directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities."

Nor should I find fault with him for his very deeply-rooted conviction that, so far as any real and deep reform is accomplished, it may in a certain sense be said to *accomplish itself*, instead of being forced on society by the enthusiastic patronage of crusading philanthropists, had he but confined this theory within modest limits,—had he not pressed it into the service of what seems to me the grossest political immorality. I can sympathise with him when he so finely moralises at the end of the "Blithedale Romance" on the dangers of philanthropy:—

"Admitting what is called philanthropy, when adopted as a profession, to be often useful by its energetic impulses to society at large, it is perilous to the individual whose ruling passion, in one exclusive channel, it thus becomes. It ruins, or is fearfully apt to ruin, the heart, the rich juices of which God never meant should be pressed violently out and distilled into alcoholic liquor by an unnatural process; but should render life sweet, bland, and gently beneficent, and insensibly influence other hearts and other lives to the same blessed end."

Yet more; I can even go with him, quite as far as he wishes his readers to go, when he ironically prescribes a universal slumber as the only cure for the world's overstrained nerves:—

"The world should recline its vast head on the first convenient pillow, and take an age-long nap. It has gone distracted through a morbid activity, and while preternaturally wide awake is never-

theless tormented by visions that seem real to it now, but would assume their true aspect and character were all things once set right by an interval of sound repose. This is the only method of getting rid of old delusions and avoiding new ones,—of regenerating our race so that it might in due time awake as an infant out of dewy slumber,—of restoring to us the simple perception of what is right and the single-hearted desire to achieve it, both of which have long been lost in consequence of this weary activity of brain, and torpor or passion of the heart, that now afflict the universe ;”—

to which he characteristically added in a different passage of his writings, his own present yearning for a long and profound sleep of at least a thousand years between Death and Resurrection.

For none of these thoughts and sayings, however depreciative of effort, or destructive of the sanguine hopes with which effort spurs itself on, could I reproach Hawthorne. It is fitting that, after the preacher of one-sided action and overstrained vigilance has spoken, this too restless age should also hear the invitation to distrust his own “earnestness,” and renew its highly-strung energies by rest. Nay, the function of the contemplative man, who keeps clear of the many streams of human energy, and passes his solitary criticisms upon their tendency from some nook of seemingly selfish retirement, is justified in the scheme of Providence by the very existence of the philanthropic class of one-sided workers. But it is when Hawthorne came to apply his quietistic creed to the actual political world in which he lived, that I find his moral shortcomings painfully evident, and see that he had permitted a mere theory to confuse “that

simple perception of what is right, and the single-hearted desire to achieve it," of which he speaks so well, as grievously as ever a professional philanthropist was deceived by his one dominant idea.

Little as Hawthorne was disposed to mix in the strife of the political arena, once at least he was not willing to let that *vox populi* in which he placed so much confidence speak without a suggestion from himself. In the little electioneering volume on the life of Franklin Pierce, who was then (in 1852) a candidate, and as it proved a successful candidate, for the Presidency of the United States, Hawthorne offered his suggestion in the form of an application of his theory to the subject of spasmodic philanthropy as exhibited on the question of slavery. The contest, at the time of General Pierce's election, turned, as all the contests then did, chiefly on this question. General Pierce represented the party of conciliation to the South,—the party of union at almost any sacrifice of Northern principles. The fugitive-slave law had just passed, and the higher-minded politicians of the Northern States were eager to get a reversal of that disgraceful Act. General Pierce had pledged himself to sustain that Act and the whole system of which it was a part, and it was Hawthorne's object to justify the policy of his friend. After condemning the Northern men, who thought that the world stood still except so far as the anti-slavery cause went forward, for their narrowness, he proceeded thus:—

"There is still another view, and probably as wise a one. It looks upon slavery as one of those evils which Divine Providence

does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, shall vanish like a dream. There is no instance in all history of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world at every step leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify.”<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, Hawthorne's recommendation to the people of the Northern States was to acquiesce in the Southern encroachments, and trust to Providence for the removal of this foul blot on American institutions. He eulogized General Pierce as “the man who dared to love that great and grand reality—his whole united native country—*better than the mistiness of a philanthropic theory.*”<sup>2</sup> And he warned the anti-slavery party, in General Pierce's name, that the evil of disunion would be certain, while the good was “at best a contingency, and (to the clear practical foresight with which he looked into the future) scarcely so much as that, attended as the movement was, and must be during its progress, with the aggravated injury of those whose condition it aimed to ameliorate, and terminating in its possible triumph,—if such possibility there were,—with the ruin of two races which now dwelt together in greater peace and affection, it is not too much to say, than had ever elsewhere existed between the taskmaster and the serf.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Life of Franklin Pierce,” pp. 113, 114.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 111, 112.

This is the most immoral kind of political fatalism. It is true enough, and is often forgotten by philanthropists, that men can do little enough for each other's highest good by any voluntary effort. Most men who undertake such efforts, fall victims not perhaps to the "mistiness" so much as to the narrow definiteness "of philanthropic theory." They forget that philanthropic tastes can only be safely humoured by those who keep constantly before their inmost hearts the exhortation, "Physician, heal thyself." But there is a wide distinction between a philanthropic cause and a concession of the barest justice to the oppressed. Measured by Hawthorne's standard, there would be no criminal national custom, however oppressive, with which it would be our duty to proclaim open war. He might denounce the political advocates of any such war as sacrificing the national peace to the "mistiness of philanthropic theory." Was there, then, no distinction in moral sacredness between the claims of schemes for doing good to others,—little good of the deeper kind as we can do for any but ourselves,—and the duty of removing obstructions which entirely blotted out the proper voluntary existence of other men? Was the duty of restoring moral freedom to a whole race to be classed as one of the doubtful visionary philanthropies of modern times? Is it not obvious that, little as we may be able to organise mutual spiritual help of the higher kind, we are most fearfully competent to organise mutual moral injury of the lowest kind, and that slavery was one of the grandest of diabolic devices for that end?

I do not say that Hawthorne was bound to be an anti-slavery agitator. I do say that he prostituted the noblest speculative faculties, when he attempted to perpetuate a fearful national crime on the dishonest plea that those who strove to resist its extension and to limit its duration were endangering the Union for the sake of a "misty philanthropic theory." The fatalism which Hawthorne rather suggested than advocated in "Transformation," when he presented sin as the necessary condition of moral growth, received a terrible elucidation when he calmly deprecated all impatient criticism of the providential "uses" of slavery as if they were the affair of Providence alone. In the great civil war, his sympathies, as might be expected, were with the trimming Buchanans and Douglasses of the hour, not with Mr. Lincoln, of whom he spoke slightly as a man incapable of true statesmanship.

I need scarcely apologise for treating Hawthorne as something more than a mere writer of fiction. His writings have a very wide and justly-deserved influence in America; for as a literary artist, if not in mere rough genius, he may safely be considered almost the first, and quite the highest, fruit of American culture. He himself recognised the close connection between the political and literary condition of nations, in his plea that America was too happy, too prosperous, too free "from any picturesque and gloomy wrong," to be made the scene of a romance. Let me sum up my criticism on his literary deficiencies in a single sentence, by expressing my conviction,



that if he had conceded less to his "squeamish love of the beautiful," if he had cultivated a deeper sympathy with action and its responsibilities, he would not only have taken some interest in the removal of wrongs that were gloomy enough whether picturesque or not, but might have widened greatly the range of his artistic power, and deepened indefinitely the spell of the great fascination which he wielded over his countrymen.



### III.

## ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.<sup>1</sup>

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THESE two volumes, as they now stand, contain as adequate a picture of the singular but large, simple, and tender nature of the Oxford poet as is attainable, and it is one which no one can study without much profit, and perhaps also some loss ; without feeling the high exaltation of true poetry and the keen pleasure caused by the subtlety of true scholarship, at every turn ; nor also without feeling now and again those " blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realized," which are scattered so liberally among these buoyant ardours, disappointed longings, and moods of speculative suspense, and which characterize these singular letters of reticent tenderness and rough self-satire.

<sup>1</sup> " The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough, with a Selection from his Letters, and a Memoir." Edited by his wife. 2 vols. With a portrait. Macmillan.

Every one who knew Clough even slightly received the strongest impression of the unusual breadth and massiveness of his mind. Singularly simple and genial, he was unfortunately cast upon a self-questioning age, which led him to worry himself with constantly testing the veracity of his own emotions. He has delineated in four lines the impression which his habitual reluctance to converse on the deeper themes of life made upon those of his friends who were attracted by his frank simplicity. In one of his shorter poems he writes :—

“I said my heart is all too soft ;  
He who would climb and soar aloft  
Must needs keep ever at his side  
The tonic of a wholesome pride.”

This expresses the man in a very remarkable manner. He had a kind of proud simplicity about him, singularly attractive, and often singularly disappointing to those who longed to know him well. He had a fear, which many would think morbid, of leaning much on the approbation of the world ; and there is one characteristic passage in his poems, in which he intimates that men who lean on the good opinion of others might even be benefited by a *crime* which would rob them of that evil stimulant :—

“Why so is good no longer good, but crime  
Our truest best advantage ; since it lifts us  
Out of the stifling gas of men’s opinion  
Into the vital atmosphere of Truth,  
Where He again is visible, though in anger.”

So eager was his craving for reality and perfect sincerity, so morbid his dislike even for the unreal conventional forms of life, that a mind quite unique in simplicity and truthfulness represents itself in his poems as

“ Seeking in vain, in all my store,  
One feeling based on truth.”

Indeed, he wanted to reach some guarantee for simplicity deeper than simplicity itself. I remember his principal criticism on America, after returning from his residence in Massachusetts, was that the New Englanders were much simpler than the English, and that this was the great charm of New England society. His own habits were of the same kind,—sometimes almost austere in their simplicity. Luxury he disliked, and sometimes his friends thought him even ascetic.

This almost morbid craving for a firm base on the absolute realities of life was very wearing in a mind so self-conscious as Clough's, and tended to paralyse the expression of a certainly great genius. As a rule, his lyrical poems fall short of complete success in delineating the mood which they are really meant to delineate, owing to this chronic state of introspective criticism on himself in which he is too apt to write, and which, characteristic as it is, necessarily diminishes the linearity and directness of the feeling expressed, refracting it, as it were, through media of very variable density. As he himself,—no doubt in this stanza delineating himself,—says of one of his heroes in “the Clergyman's first tale” :—

“With all his eager motions still there went  
A self-correcting and ascetic bent,  
That from the obvious good still led astray,  
And set him travelling on the longest way.”

And in the same poem there are descriptive touches which very skilfully portray the nature of those dispersive influences, as I may call them, in his character which, while they may injure his lyrical, add a great wealth of criticism to his speculative and disquisitional poems:—

“Beside the wishing-gate, which so they name  
'Mid Northern hills, to me this fancy came;  
A wish I formed, my wish I thus expressed:  
*'Would I could wish my wishes all to rest,  
And know to wish the wish that were the best!*  
Oh, for some winnowing wind to th' empty air  
This chaff of easy sympathies to bear  
Far off, and leave me of myself aware!’”

That is clearly self-portraiture, and it describes an element in Clough's nature which, no doubt, contributed greatly to diminish the number of his few but exquisite lyrical poems, and sometimes to confine even those to the delineation of feelings of a certain vagueness of drift. Yet there was, besides this most subtle and almost over-perfect intellectual culture in Clough, much also of a boyish, half-formed nature in him, even to the last, which, when fully roused, contributed a great deal of the animation, and, when least roused, contributed not a little of the embarrassed, shy, half-articulate tone to some of the most critical passages of his finest poems. He describes this side of boyish

feeling admirably in one of his "In Mari Magno" tales:—

“How ill our boyhood understands  
Incipient manhood's strong demands!  
Boys have such trouble of their own  
As none, they fancy, e'er have known,  
Such as to speak of, or to tell  
They hold were unendurable:  
Religious, social, of all kinds,  
That tear and agitate their minds.  
A thousand thoughts within me stirred  
Of which I could not speak a word;  
Strange efforts after something new  
Which I was wretched not to do;  
Passions, ambitions, lay and lurked,  
Wants, counter-wants, obscurely worked  
Without their names, and unexplained.”

And even in his latest and most finished poems you see the working of this half-developed element of Clough's massive and rich but to some extent inert imagination; and you see, too, how powerfully it operated to discontent him with his own productions, to make him underrate vastly their real worth. Rapidly as his genius ripened at an age when, with most men, the first flush of it would have passed over, there was something of conscious inertia, not unlike immaturity, in it to the last, which gives a tone of proud hesitation, a slowness of hand, to the literary style of his finest poems. He calls himself, in his "Long Vacation Pastoral," "the grave man, nicknamed Adam," and there is really something of the flavour of primeval earth, of its unready vigour and crude

laboriousness, about his literary nature. Even when he succeeds best, the reader seems to see him "wipe his honourable brows bedewed with toil." And yet he is impatient with himself for not succeeding better, and despises his own work.

The "Long Vacation Pastoral" belongs to a class of poems that is scarcely naturalized in England—the class of which Goethe's "Hermann and Dorothea" is perhaps the most perfect specimen, though in vigour and breadth of imagination Clough's pastoral is certainly not inferior. Goethe's influence over the school of poetry of which Matthew Arnold and Clough have been the most considerable English disciples, is very powerfully marked. There is the same longing after the old Homeric simplicity,—less successful perhaps in a cultivated Englishman than in the more childlike German,—the same love of homely naturalness of manner, of the wholesome flavour of earth, an even deeper desire to tame or exorcise all romance that is alien to common sense, and the same intellectual disposition to give common sense the casting vote, wherever there seems to be a conflict between it and the thirst of their own natures for something deeper. Moreover, in Clough's poem there is the same underlying theme which haunted Goethe so constantly,—the wish to analyse the true secret of womanly fascination, and finally, the key-note of the answer given in the "Long Vacation Pastoral" is also the key-note of the "Hermann and Dorothea," that the highest charms of women consist in a certain union between homely usefulness and classical beauty, in the graceful

cutting of bread-and-butter, like Werther's "Charlotte," or graceful "potato-uprooting," like Philip's heroine in Clough's Pastoral. As one of his "reading" party expresses it:—

"All cathedrals are Christian, all Christians are cathedrals :  
Such is the Catholic doctrine ; 'tis ours with a slight variation.  
Every woman is or ought to be a cathedral,  
Built on the ancient plan— a cathedral pure and perfect,  
*Built by that only law, that Use be suggester of Beauty ;*  
*Nothing concealed that is done, but all things done to adorn-*  
*ment ;*  
*Meanest utilities seized as occasions to grace and embellish."*

But if the school of art and the predominant thought which mark Goethe's "Hermann and Dorothea" and Clough's poem are the same,—if they both alike seek and find their ideal of women in "the freshness of the early world," in some well-born or well-taught maiden,

"Milking the kine in the field ; like Rachel watering cattle,  
Rachel, when at the well the predestined beheld and kissed  
her ;  
Or with pail upon head, like Dora beloved of Alexis,  
Comely, with well-poised pail over neck arching soft to the  
shoulders,  
Comely in gracefullest act, one arm uplifted to stay it,  
Home from the river or pump moving stately and calm to the  
laundry ;"

—yet all the imaginative form and framework of Clough's poem are entirely his own,—entirely original, and marked strongly with the stamp of its Oxford origin.



The almost Homeric vigour with which all the characteristics of the reading party are dashed off, the genial humour with which their personal peculiarities are coloured in, the buoyant life of the discussions which arise among them, the strength with which the Highland scenery is conceived and rendered in a few brilliant touches, the tenderness and simplicity with which now and then the deeper pathos of life is allowed to be seen in glimpses through the intellectual play of the poem, are all Clough's own. He is far more terse, far less prolix than the great German poet in his style of painting homely nature. There is none of that relaxed fibre which makes scoffers say that Goethe is a little spooney on his Charlotte's bread-and-butter, and his Dorothea's proficiency as a waggoner. Clough's poem is masculine throughout, though the sentiment is perhaps not entirely healthy, and the humour, therefore, is of a kind of which Goethe had little trace. Here, for example, is Airlie, the high dresser of the party:—

“Airlie descended the last, effulgent as god of Olympus;  
Blue, half-doubtfully blue, was the coat that had white silk  
facings;  
Waistcoat blue, coral buttoned, the white tie finely adjusted,  
Coral moreover the studs on a shirt as of crochet of women:  
When the fourwheel for ten minutes already had stood at the  
gateway,  
He, like a god, came leaving his ample Olympian chamber.”

And here is a Highland dance, in which Airlie again figures, described with all the humour and force of a modern Homer:—

“—Him rivalling, Hobbes, briefest kilted of heroes,  
Enters, O stoutest, O rashest of creatures, mere fool of a Saxon,  
Skill-less of philibeg, skill-less of reel too, the whirl and the  
twirl o’t:

Him see I frisking and whisking, and ever at swifter gyration  
Under brief curtain revealing broad acres—not of broad cloth.  
Him see I there and the Piper—the Piper what vision beholds  
not?

Him and his Honour with Arthur, with Janet our Piper, and is it,  
Is it, O marvel of marvels! he too in the maze of the mazy,  
Skipping and tripping, though stately, though languid, with head  
on one shoulder,

Airlie, with sight of the waistcoat the golden-haired Katie con-  
soling?

Katie, who simple and comely, and smiling and blushing as ever,  
What though she wear on that neck a blue kerchief, remembered  
as Philip’s,

Seems in her maidenly freedom to need small consolement of  
waistcoats!”

Or take the description of Sir Hector’s speech at  
the clansmen’s dinner, which is rich in Homeric met-  
aphor, as well as modern humour:—

“Bid me not, grammar defying, repeat from grammar defiers  
Long constructions strange, and plusquam-Thucydidean,  
Tell how, as sudden torrent in time of speat in the mountain  
Hurries six ways at once, and takes at last to the roughest,  
Or as the practised rider at Astley’s or Franconi’s,  
Skilfully, boldly bestrides many steeds at once in the gallop,  
Crossing from this to that, with one leg here, one yonder,  
So, less skilful, but equally bold and wild as the torrent,  
All through sentences six at a time, unsuspecting of syntax,  
Hurried the lively good will and garrulous tale of Sir Hector.”

Not, however, by such passages as these can be mea-

sured the depth and fulness of Clough's poetic nature. I have said that, in his dread of the romantic school, and his longing for that antique type of nobility in which the simpler and more homely tasks are associated with classical grace and dignity, he had borrowed much from Goethe. But his mind had been also deeply influenced by the very different poetry of Wordsworth in his strong love of a frugal, hardy, and simple industry as the highest school of human character. And perhaps too, in spite of his steady preference of Aristotle to Plato, of common sense to what he thought idealism, of what is common to what is high, the deep and sometimes transcendental musings of Wordsworth's meditative mind had a charm for him of which he was almost ashamed. At all events, there is a gleam of transcendental depth and subtlety here and again in this poem, shyly—almost apologetically—put forth, and scarcely put forth but to be withdrawn. The lines in which Elspie confesses her love for Philip, the radiant poet, are couched in a very different key from that of Goethe's naturalistic school,—a different, and I think a higher key:—

“And she was silent some time, and blushed all over, and  
answered

Quietly, after her fashion, still knitting, ‘Maybe I think of it,  
Though I don’t know that I did;’ and she paused again. ‘But  
it may be;

Yes, I don’t know, Mr. Philip, but only it feels to me strangely  
Like to the high new bridge they used to build at, below there,  
Over the burn and glen on the road. You won’t understand  
me.

But I keep saying in my mind—this long time, slowly with trouble,

I have been building myself up, up, and toilfully raising,  
Just like as if the bridge were to do itself without masons,  
Painfully getting myself upraised one stone on another,  
All one side, I mean; and now I see on the other  
Just such another fabric uprising, better and stronger,  
Close to me, coming to join me. And then I sometimes fancy,—  
Sometimes I find myself dreaming at night about arches and  
bridges,—

Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand coming down and  
Dropping the great key-stone in the middle; there in my  
dreaming

There I felt the great key-stone coming in, and through it  
Feel the other part,—all the other stones of the archway,  
Joined into mine, with a strange happy sense of completeness.  
But, dear me,

This is confusion and nonsense. I mix all the things I can  
think of,

And you won't understand, Mr. Philip."

This is a definite addition to the great doctrine of the poem, that women, like flowers, must be "rooted in earth" to be either beautiful or useful—a definite addition and a noble addition. Here we have something of Wordsworth's conception of the poet:—

"The outward shows of sky and earth,  
Of hill and valley, he has viewed,  
And impulses of deeper birth  
Have come to him in solitude."

There are "impulses of deeper birth" struggling with the naturalism of Clough's chosen school of thought. Still, the great sea, and the wide omnipresent sunlight,

are his favourite symbols of what is divine,—what is broad, bright, and simple, rather than what is lofty, mysterious, and dim.

Clough always seems to have needed external stimulus, something of excitement in the atmosphere, for his best poetic success. Thus, the siege of Rome during his residence there in 1849 was the stimulus which gave rise to his very original and striking poem, "*Amours de Voyage*,"—a poem brimful of the breath of his Oxford culture, of Dr. Newman's metaphysics, of classical tradition, of the political enthusiasm of the time, and of his own large, speculative humour, subtle hesitancy of brain, and rich pictorial sense. Yet so ill satisfied was he with this striking poem, that he kept it nine years in MS., and published it apologetically at last only in an American magazine, the "*Atlantic Monthly*." He himself says that what he doubted about in it was not its truth of conception, but its vigour of execution. Yet no execution could have been more perfect of the picture—a picture of inchoacy, I admit—which he intended to draw. Mr. Emerson has in some cases shown himself a fine critic; but he never made a more egregious blunder than when he found fault with Clough for not making this poem end more satisfactorily. The whole meaning and drift of it would have been spoiled if it had so ended. His idea was to draw a mind so reluctant to enter on action, shrinking so morbidly from the effects of the "*ruinous force of the will*," that even when most desirous of action it would find a hundred trivial intellectual excuses for shrinking back in spite of that

desire. His own explanation of the poem is contained in the final verse :—

“ So go forth to the world, to the good report and the evil !

Go, little book ! thy tale, is it not evil and good ?

Go, and if strangers revile, pass quietly by without answer.

Go, and if curious friends ask of thy rearing and age,

Say, ‘ I am flitting about many years from brain unto brain of

Feeble and restless youths born to inglorious days :

But,’ so finish the word, ‘ I was writ in a Roman chamber,

When from Janiculan heights thundered the cannon of France.’ ”

And it is this brain of what the author chooses to call “ feeble and restless youths born to inglorious days ” that the poem is meant to delineate throughout,—its speculative discontent, its passion for the abstract, its dread of being committed to a course, its none the less eager craving for action and for the life that can only be reached through action, its driftings and reactions ;—and all this is artistically contrasted with the great Roman stage on which so many great dramas had been enacted in years gone by, and whereon one great revolutionary drama was going forward at that very moment. To my mind, the poem would lose half its character and meaning if the hero’s incipency of passion had been developed into anything but incipency, if it had not faded away, just as it is represented as doing, with the first difficulties, into a restless but still half-relieved passiveness. The irony of the poem, with its background of Mazzinian and Garibaldian achievement, would have been utterly spoiled by any other conclusion. How perfect a picture of the paralysis caused by too subtly speculative a nature is there

in such lines as these, for example, in which the hero declares his intention to abide by the indications of the first adverse throw of fortune:—

“Great is Fate, and is best. I believe in Providence partly.

What is ordained is right, and all that happens is ordered.

*Ah, no, that isn't it! But yet I retain my conclusion.*

I will go where I am led, and will not dictate to the chances.”

“Amours de Voyage” would indeed have been spoiled, if it had ended “prettily,” like any other novel.

The oftener I return to Clough's unfinished but striking poems, the more I am struck by something in their fresh natural handling, and a certain lustre of sunlight on their surface, which suggests to me a modern and intellectualized Chaucer; and I think the same homely breadth and simplicity were strongly marked in his countenance. Of course, the whole essence of such genius is changed by the intellectual conditions of Clough's age, and the still higher intellectual conditions of his personal career. But the characteristic is only the more strongly marked for such striking and fundamental variations; and had he lived to fill more completely with his individual genius, and to complete the beautiful fragments of tales which are entitled “In Mari Magno,” every one would have noticed not merely an external resemblance in structure and scheme, but a very close analogy in genius between the “Canterbury Tales,” by the father of English poetry, and the series by this later representative of our academic school. This Chaucer-like love of the natural simplicities of life

was probably Clough's strongest creative impulse; his mode of describing is in the same style of bold, direct, affectionate feeling for the earth and the true children of the earth; and the homely though polished pathos of his stories has again and again filled me with like haunting associations, even when the analogy was so much disguised by the different intellectual accent of our times that its secret was not easy to catch. In the following piece, there is certainly no manner of difficulty in tracing the resemblance. But though the similarity of mere style may arise from Clough's own familiarity with the poet, and with the tales whose plan he was adopting, the portrait is certainly studied from an ecclesiastical type quite foreign to Chaucer's age:—

“The vicar was of bulk and thews,  
Six feet he stood within his shoes,  
And every inch of all a man;  
Ecclesiast, on the ancient plan,  
Unforced by any party rule  
His native character to school;  
In ancient learning not unread,  
But had few doctrines in his head;  
Dissenters truly he abhorred;  
They never had his gracious word.  
He ne'er was bitter, or unkind,  
But positively spoke his mind;  
Their piety he could not bear,—  
A sneaking snivelling set they were.  
Their tricks and meanness fired his blood;  
Up for his Church he stoutly stood.  
No worldly aim had he in life  
To set him with himself at strife.



A spade, a spade he freely named,  
And of his joke was not ashamed;  
Made it, and laughed at it, be sure,  
With young and old, with rich and poor.  
His sermons frequently he took  
Out of some standard reverend book;  
They seemed a little strange indeed,  
But were not likely to mislead.  
Others he gave that were his own,—  
The difference could be quickly known.  
Though sorry not to have a boy,  
His daughters were his perfect joy;  
He plagued them, oft drew tears from each,  
Was bold and hasty in his speech,  
All through the house you heard him call,  
He had his vocatives for all;  
Patty Patina, Pat became,  
Lydia took Languish with her name;  
Philippa was the Gentle Queen,  
And Phœbe Madam Prosperine;  
The pseudonyms for Mary Gwen  
Varied with every week again;  
But Emily, of all the set,  
Emilia called, was most the pet."

It is not the mere forms here, it is the simple, direct manner of painting which brings back a flavour of Chaucer to the memory as we read the more intellectual poet of modern days. Look, again, at Clough's feeling for women's beauty; the mingled breadth and tenderness of his drawing, his keen sense of the healthy simplicity of true womanliness, his constant preference for the true woman rather than the true lady, his evident bias for that which has its root in the homely earth, though it attains a beauty which earth alone

could not give ; it is Chaucer become conscious of the difference between his own inner mind and the taste of our modern intellectual day. Chaucer describes his ideas of feminine loveliness in the person of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, thus :—

“ I sawgh hir daunce so comeley,  
Carole and synge so swetely,  
Laughe and pleye so womanly,  
And loke so debonairly ;  
So goodely speke, and so friendly ;  
That, certes, I trow that evermore  
Nas (was not) seyne so blysful a tresore.  
For every heer on hir hede,  
Sothe to seyne, hyt nas not rede,  
Ne nouthur yelow, ne browne, hyt nas,  
Me thought most lyke golde hyt was.  
And whiche eyen (eyes) my lady hadde !  
Debonaire, goode, glade, and sadde (grave),  
Symple, of goode mochel, nought to wide.  
Therto hir looke was not asyde,  
Ne owerwert, but besette to wele,  
It drewe and took everydele,  
Alle that on hir gonne beholde.”

And now let me take an extract from one of Clough's tales to compare with this picture of Chaucer's :—

“ A highland inn amongst the western hills,  
A single parlour, single bed, that fills  
With fisher or with tourist as may be ;  
A waiting maid as fair as you can see,  
With hazel eyes and frequent blushing face,  
And ample brow, and with a rustic grace  
In all her easy ample motions seen,  
Large of her age, which haply is nineteen ;

Christian her name, in full a pleasant name,  
Christian and Christie scarcely seem the same.  
A college fellow who has sent away  
The pupils he has taught for many a day,  
And comes for fishing and for solitude,  
Perhaps a little pensive in his mood,  
An aspiration and a thought have failed,  
Where he had hoped, another has prevailed,  
But to the joys of hill and stream alive,  
And in his boyhood yet at twenty-five.

A merry dance that made young people meet,  
And set them moving both with hands and feet :  
A dance in which he danced and nearer knew  
The soft brown eyes, and found them tender too.  
A dance that lit in two young hearts the fire,  
The low soft flame of loving sweet desire,  
And made him feel that he could feel again ;  
The preface this what follows to explain."

Of course the parallel must not be pushed too far, for even Chaucer, if possessed of all the new culture, and striving to harmonize it with his large, simple, healthy, human tastes, would become quite a new man. And no doubt Clough's poetry is in nature and essence intellectual. Still there is no poet of our generation whose intellectuality gives less of the effect of a thinning and refining away of life to a shadow than Clough. Such subtlety as there is in him is of a broad, sweeping, comprehensive kind, not logical but practical ; not the fine instinct with which Tennyson, for instance, follows out one by one a hundred shadowy paths of imaginative reasoning, but the wide subtlety which hovers hither and thither over one or two of the greater chasms that separate thought from action. The ground

quakes under Clough's feet at points where generally it would be supposed firm ; and where ordinary men's imaginative doubts begin, his scarcely reach. The effect on his poetry is to exercise his imagination in depicting not so much universal feelings as the craving of the cultivated mind for *permission* to surrender to them. In some of his most characteristic verses he asks :—

“ What we, when face to face we see  
The Father of our souls, shall be,  
John tells us, does not yet appear ;  
Ah ! did he tell what we are here !

A mind for thoughts to pass into,  
A heart for loves to travel through,  
Five senses to detect things near,  
Is this the whole that we are here ?

Rules baffle instincts—instincts rules,  
Wise men are bad—and good are fools ;  
Facts evil—wishes vain appear,  
We cannot go, why are we here ?

O may we for assurance' sake,  
Some arbitrary judgment take,  
And wilfully pronounce it clear  
For this or that 'tis we are here ?

Or is it right, and will it do,  
To pace the sad confusion through,  
And say :—‘ It doth not yet appear,  
What we shall be, what we are here ’?

Ah ! yet when all is thought and said,  
The heart still overrules the head ;  
Still what we hope we must believe,  
And what is given us, receive ;

Must still believe ; for still we hope  
That in a world of larger scope  
What here is faithfully begun  
Will be completed, not undone.

My child, we still must think, when we  
That ampler life together see,  
Some true result will yet appear  
Of what we are, together, here."

This, like almost all Clough's poems of this class, presents the effect of a homely, simple, human beauty, half undermined by fundamental doubts,—doubts suggested, indeed, only to be partially abandoned, but also to be partially maintained, as a preservative against the blind eager confidence of presumptuous faith. The massive and genial sympathy which Clough feels with the universal instincts of human nature, alike religious and social, is the first marked feature that strikes us in all his poems: then the sifting process begins of tracing them to their roots, showing how much wider is the trust placed in them in the practical conduct of modern life, than it is possible to justify intellectually; and then when he has pared these instincts down to their minimum of meaning, and we have been shown how impossible our whole life would be if they were given no greater validity than that, they are permitted, though with hesitation and a doubtful or rather hypothetical confidence, to take back something of their natural authority, now that it is fairly shown to be liable to all kinds of presumptuous error.

No doubt, this sort of large half-genial suspense of

judgment, that looks upon natural instincts with a sort of loving doubt, and yields with cautious hand a certain limited authority to human yearnings in order not wholly to lose a share in the moving forces of life, is not likely to be widely popular. With Clough this suspense of human judgment was unfortunately not supplemented by any confident belief in a divine answer to those vague yearnings, and consequently his tone is almost always at once sweet and sad. It is saturated with the deep but musical melancholy of such thoughts as the following, whose pathos shows how much more profoundly and deeply Clough thirsted for truth than many of even the most confident of those of us who believe that there is a living water at which to slake our thirst:—

“ To spend uncounted years of pain,  
Again, again, and yet again,  
In working out in heart and brain  
The problem of our being here ;  
To gather facts from far and near,  
Upon the mind to hold them clear,  
And, knowing more may yet appear,  
Unto one's latest breath to fear  
The premature result to draw—  
Is this the object, end, and law,  
And purpose of our being here ?”

Yet even in poetry of this kind, which abounds in the volume, there is something of the same large, hesitating melancholy that we should expect, if once a mind of homely Chaucer-like wisdom fell under a cloud of modern doubt. Instead of applying itself, like the ordinary scepticism, to particular riddles, it

would touch the whole substance of life, not unkindly, with Clough's questioning finger; treat the fundamental instincts which guide us into our human relations with the same half-confidence; try to separate, even in dealing with "love," the real affinity of nature from the "juxtaposition" of habit, and show the problem to be indeterminate with the same quaint humour. And in things divine it would state the problem as fairly, and substitute a sigh of pathetic hope for the solution, with the same sad fidelity. It may be something of a fancy, but it is at all events a fancy that touches the border of truth, if I recognise even in the type of Clough's genial scepticism something not entirely unlike the scepticism which might pervade the mind of a Chaucer, watching with the old homely shrewdness as well as the rich modern culture the swaying tides of our theological debate, and clinging too closely itself to the human forms of beauty and goodness to come with any clear personal conviction out of the strife.

And yet Clough's great literary powers never manifested themselves even to his most intimate friends by any outward sign at all commensurate with the profound belief they had in his genius. But if his powers did not, there was much in his character that did produce its full effect upon all who knew him. He steadily refrained from looking, even in time of severe trial, to his own interest, when what seemed to him higher interests were at issue. He never flinched from the worldly loss which his deepest convictions brought on him. Even when clouds were thick over his own

head, and the ground beneath his feet seemed crumbling away, he could still bear witness to an eternal light behind the cloud, and tell others that there is solid ground to be reached in the end by the feet of all who will wait to be strong:—

“ Say not, the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been, they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars,  
It may be, in yon smoke concealed  
Your comrades chased e’en now the fliers,  
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light:  
In front the sun climbs slow—how slowly!  
But westward, look, the land is bright.”

I do not think that any competent judge who really studies Clough's *Remains* will doubt for a moment that he was one of the most original men of our age, and perhaps its most intellectual, and buoyant, though very far, of course, from its richest, most musical and exquisite poet. There is a very peculiar and unique attraction about what I may call the physical and almost animal buoyancy of these subtly intellectual rhythms and verses, when once the mass of the poet's mind—by no means easy to get into motion—is fairly



under weigh. Mr. Matthew Arnold and Clough both represent the stream of the modern Oxford intellectual tradition in their poems, but how different is their genius. With all his intellectual precision, there is something of the boyishness, of the simplicity, of the vascular Saxon breadth of Chaucer's poetry in Clough; while Mr. Arnold's poetical ancestor is certainly no earlier than Wordsworth. There are both flesh and spirit, as well as emotion and speculation, in Clough; while, in Mr. Arnold, soul and sentiment guide the emotion and the speculation. There is tenderness in both; but Clough's is the tenderness of earthly sympathy, and Mr. Arnold's the lyrical cry of Virgilian compassion. Both fill half their poems with the most subtle intellectual meditations; but Clough leaves them all but where they were, not even half settled, reproaching himself for mooning over them so long; while Mr. Arnold finds some sort of a delicate solution, or no-solution, for all of them, and sorts them with the finest nicety. Finally, when they both reach their highest poetical point, Mr. Arnold is found painting lucidly in a region of pure and exquisite sentiment, Clough singing a sort of pæan of buoyant and exultant strength:—

“ But, O, blithe breeze, and O, great seas,  
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,  
On your wide plain they join again,  
Together lead them home at last!  
One port, methought, alike they sought,  
One purpose hold where'er they fare.  
O, bounding breeze, O, rushing seas,  
At last, at last, unite them there!”

#### IV.

### WORDSWORTH AND HIS GENIUS.

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THE commonplace modern criticism on Wordsworth is that he is too transcendental. On the other hand the criticism with which he was first assailed, which Coleridge indignantly repelled, and which is reflected in the admirable parody published among the "Rejected Addresses," was that he was ridiculously simple, that he made an unintelligible fuss about common feelings and common things. The reconciliation of these opposite criticisms is not difficult. He drew uncommon delights from very common things. His circle of interests was, for a poet, singularly narrow. He was a hardy Cumbrian mountaineer, with the temperament of a thoroughly frugal peasant, and a unique personal gift of discovering the deepest secondary springs of joy in what ordinary men either took as matter of course, or found uninteresting, or even full of pain. The same sort of power which scientific men have of studiously fixing their minds on

natural phenomena till they make these phenomena yield lessons and laws of which no understanding destitute of this capacity for detaching itself entirely from the commonplace train of intellectual associations would have dreamt, Wordsworth had in relation to objects of the imagination. He could detach his mind from the commonplace series of impressions which are generated by commonplace objects or events, resist and often reverse the current of emotion to which ordinary minds are liable, and triumphantly justify the strain of rapture with which he celebrated what excites either no feeling, or weary feeling, or painful feeling, in the mass of unreflecting men. Two distinct peculiarities, and rare peculiarities of character, chiefly assisted him in this—his keen spiritual courage, and his stern spiritual frugality. Though his poetry reads so transcendental, and is so meditative, there never was a poet who was so little of a dreamer as Wordsworth. There is volition and self-government in every line of his poetry, and his best thoughts come from the steady resistance he opposes to the ebb and flow of ordinary desires and regrets. He contests the ground inch by inch with all despondent and indolent humours, and often, too, with movements of inconsiderate and wasteful joy—turning defeat into victory, and victory into defeat. He transmutes sorrows into food for lonely rapture, as he dwells upon the evidence they bear of the depth and fortitude of human nature; he transmutes the periodic joy of social conventions into melancholy as he recalls how “the wiser mind”

“Mourns less for what age takes away  
Than what it leaves behind.”

No poet ever contrived by dint of “plain living and high thinking” to get nearer to the reality of such life as he understood, and to dispel more thoroughly the illusions of superficial impression.

To this same result again the rare spiritual frugality of Wordsworth greatly contributed. Poets, as a rule, lust for emotion; some of the most unique poets—like Shelley and Byron in their very different ways—pant for an unbroken succession of ardent feelings. Wordsworth, as I shall try to show, was almost a miser in his reluctance to trench upon the spiritual capital at his disposal. He hoarded his joys, and lived upon the interest which they paid in the form of hope and expectation. This is one of the most original parts of his poetic character. It was only the windfalls, as one may say, of his imagination, the accidents on which he had never counted beforehand, the delight of which he dared thoroughly to exhaust. He paused almost in awe at the threshold of any promised enjoyment, as if it were a spendthrift policy to exchange the hope for the reality. A delight once over, he multiplied it a thousand-fold through the vision of “that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude.” Spiritual thrift was at the very root of his soul, and this was one of his most remarkable distinctions among a race who in spiritual things are too often prodigals and spendthrifts. In these two characteristics lies sufficient explanation of the opposite views as to his simplicity as a poet. No poet ever drew from

simpler *sources* than Wordsworth, but none ever made so much out of so little. He stemmed the commonplace currents of emotion, and often succeeded in so reversing them, that men were puzzled when they saw weakness transformed into power and sorrow into rapture. He used up successfully the waifs and strays of his imaginative life, reaped so much from opportunity, hope, and memory, that men were as puzzled at the simplicity of his delights as they are when they watch the occasions of a child's laughter.

Thus there is no poet who gives to his theme so perfectly new a birth as Wordsworth. He does not discern and revivify the *natural* life which is in it; he creates a new thing altogether, namely the life of thought which it has the power to generate in his own brooding imagination. I have already said that he uses human sorrow, for example, as an influence to stir up his own meditative spirit, till it loses its own nature and becomes

“Sorrow that is not sorrow, but delight;  
And miserable love, that is not pain  
To hear of, for the glory that redounds  
Therefrom to human kind and what we are.”<sup>1</sup>

And it is this strange transmuting power, which his meditative spirit exercises over all earthly and human themes, that gives to Wordsworth's poems the intense air of solitude which everywhere pervades them. He is the most solitary of poets. Of him, with far more point than of Milton, may it be said, in Wordsworth's

<sup>1</sup> Prelude, book xiii. p. 345.

own words, that "his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." Of all English poems, his works are the most completely outside the sphere of Shakespeare's universal genius. In solitude only could they have originated, and in solitude only can they be perfectly enjoyed. It is impossible not to feel the loneliness of a mind which never surrenders itself to the natural and obvious currents of thought or feeling in the theme the poet takes, but changes their direction by cool side-winds from his own spiritual nature. Natural rays of feeling are refracted the moment they enter Wordsworth's imagination. It is not the theme acting on the man that you see, but the man acting on the theme. He himself consciously brings to it the spiritual forces which determine the lines of meditation; he evades, or, as I have insisted, even resists the inherent tendencies of emotion belonging to his subject; catches it up into his high spiritual imagination, and makes it yield a totally different fruit of contemplation to any which it seemed naturally likely to bear. It is in this that he differs so completely in manner from other self-conscious poets—Goethe, for instance, who in like manner always left the shadow of himself on the field of his vision. But with Goethe it is a shadow of self in quite a different sense. Goethe watches himself drifting along the tide of feeling, and keeps an eye open outside his heart. But though he overhears himself, he does not interfere with himself; he listens breathlessly, and notes it down. Wordsworth, on the other hand, refuses to listen to this natural self at all. He knows another world of pure

and buoyant meditation; and he knows that all which is transplanted into it bears there a new and nobler fruit. With fixed visionary purpose, he snatches away his subject from the influence of the lower currents it is beginning to obey, and compels it to breathe its life into that silent sky of conscious freedom and immortal hope in which his own spirit lives. Wordsworth has himself explained this fixed purpose of his imagination to stay the drift of common thoughts and common trains of feeling, and lift them up into the light of a higher meditative mood, in a passage of a remarkable letter to "The Friend." It illustrates so curiously the deeper methods of his genius, that I must quote it:—

"A familiar incident may render plain the manner in which a process of intellectual improvement, the *reverse of that which nature pursues*, is by reason introduced. There never perhaps existed a school-boy who, having, when he retired to rest, carelessly blown out his candle, and having chanced to notice, as he lay upon his bed in the ensuing darkness, the sullen light which had survived the extinguished flame, did not, at some time or other, watch that light as if his mind were bound to it by a spell. It fades and revives—gathers to a point—seems as if it would go out in a moment—again recovers its strength, nay becomes brighter than before: it continues to shine with an endurance, which in its apparent weakness is a mystery—it protracts its existence so long, clinging to the power which supports it, that the observer, who had lain down in his bed so easy-minded, becomes sad and melancholy: his sympathies are touched—it is to him an intimation and an image of departing life; the thought comes nearer to him—it is the life of a venerated parent, of a beloved brother or sister, or of an aged domestic; who are gone to the grave, or whose destiny it soon may be thus to linger, thus to

hang upon the last point of moral existence, thus finally to depart and be seen no more. This is nature teaching seriously and sweetly through the affections; melting the heart, and through that instinct of tenderness, developing the understanding. In this instance the object of solicitude is the bodily life of another. Let us accompany this same boy to that period between youth and manhood, when a solicitude may be awakened for the moral life of himself. Are there any powers by which, beginning with a sense of inward decay, that affects not, however, the natural life, he could call to mind the same image, and hang over it with an equal interest as a visible type of his own perishing spirit? O, surely, if the being of the individual be under his own care; if it be his first care; if duty begin from the point of accountableness to our conscience, and through that, to God and human nature; if without such primary sense of duty, all secondary care of teacher, of friend or parent, must be baseless and fruitless; if, lastly, the motions of the soul transcend in worth those of the animal functions, nay give to them their sole value,—then truly are there such powers: and the image of the dying taper may be recalled and contemplated, though with no sadness in the nerves, no disposition to tears, no unconquerable sighs, *yet with a melancholy in the soul, a sinking inward into ourselves from thought to thought, a steady remonstrance, and a high resolve.* Let, then, the youth go back, as occasion will permit, to nature and to solitude, thus admonished by reason, and relying upon this newly-acquired support. A world of fresh sensations will gradually open upon him as his mind puts off its infirmities, and as, *instead of being propelled restlessly towards others in admiration, or too hasty love,* he makes it his prime business to understand himself. New sensations, I affirm, will be opened out—pure, and sanctioned by that reason which is their original author; and precious feelings of disinterested, that is, self-disregarding joy and love may be regenerated and restored: and, in this sense, he may be said to measure back the track of life he has trod."



One feels that the poet must live alone in order thus consciously to bathe all that he touches with a new atmosphere not his own. We are most alone when we most distinctly feel the boundary-line between ourselves and the world beyond us. In acts of free-will the sense of human solitude is always at its height; for in them we distinguish *ourselves* from all things else. And in the world of imagination this spiritual freedom is especially remarkable. *There* one has always heard that freedom is not, that genius is undisputed master of the will. Wordsworth's poetry is the living refutation of this assertion. He is so solitary, because his spirit consciously directs his imagination, and imposes on it from within influences stronger than any it receives from without.

"The outward shows of sky and earth,  
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;"

"impulses of deeper birth  
Have come to him in solitude."<sup>2</sup>

Reverie is not, in this sense, solitary, and Wordsworth is not the poet of reverie. In reverie the mind wholly loses the boundaries of its own life, and wanders away unconsciously to the world's end. Wordsworth's musings are never reveries. He neither loses himself nor the centre of his thought. He carries his own spiritual world with him, draws the thing or thought or feeling on which he intends to write from its common orbit, fixes it, like a new star, in his own higher

<sup>2</sup> "A Poet's Epitaph," vol. v. of "Wordsworth's Poems," p. 24. (The seven-volume edition.)

firmament, and there contemplates it beneath the gleaming lights and mysterious shadows of its new sphere. It is in this respect that he differs so widely in habit of thought from Coleridge, who was also a muser in his way. All his thoughts in any one poem flow as surely from a distinct centre as the fragrance from a flower. With Coleridge they flit away down every new avenue of vague suggestion, till we are lost in the inextricable labyrinth of tangled associations. The same spiritual freedom which set Wordsworth's imagination in motion, also controlled and fixed it on a single focus. And this he himself noted in contrasting his own early mental life with his friend's abstract and vagrant habits of fancy :—

“ I had forms distinct  
To steady me ; each airy thought revolved  
Round a substantial centre, which at once  
Incited it to motion and controlled.  
I did not pine like one in cities bred,  
As was thy melancholy lot, dear friend,  
Great spirit as thou art, in endless dreams  
Of sickliness, disjoining, joining, things  
Without the light of knowledge.” <sup>3</sup>

That this hardy spiritual freedom, acting through the imagination, and drawing the object of the poet's contemplation voluntarily and purposely into his own world of thought, is the most distinguishing characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry, may be best verified by comparing him with any other of our great poets. All other poets create their poetry, and even their medita-

<sup>3</sup> “ *Prelude*,” book viii. p. 224.

tive poetry, in the act of throwing themselves *into* the life of the scene or train of thought or feeling they are contemplating: Wordsworth deliberately withdraws his imagination from the heart of his picture to contemplate it in its spiritual relations. Thus, for instance, Tennyson and Wordsworth start from the same mood, the one in the song "Tears, idle tears," the other in the poem called the "Fountain." Tennyson's exquisite poem is well known:—

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean;  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,  
That brings our friends up from the underworld;  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange, as in dark summer dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;  
O Death in Life, the days that are no more."

Now turn to Wordsworth's treatment of the same theme:—

“ My eyes are dim with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirred ;  
For the same sound is in my ears  
Which in those days I heard.

Thus fares it still in our decay ;  
And yet the wiser mind  
Mourns less for what age takes away  
Than what it leaves behind.

The blackbird amid leafy trees,  
The lark above the hill,  
Let loose their carols when they please,  
Are quiet when they will.

With Nature never do they wage  
A foolish strife ; they see  
A happy youth, and their old age  
Is beautiful and free.

But we are pressed by heavy laws ;  
And often, glad no more,  
We wear a face of joy because  
We have been glad of yore.”

Tennyson continues in the same strain of emotion with which he begins, picturing the profound unspeakable sadness with which we survey the irrecoverable past ; Wordsworth no sooner touches the same theme than he checks the current of emotion, and, to use his own words, “ instead of being restlessly propelled ” by it, he makes it the object of contemplation, and, “ with no unconquerable sighs, yet with a melancholy in the soul, sinks inward into himself, from thought to thought, to a steady remonstrance and a high resolve.” And thus meditating, he wrings from the

temporary sadness fresh conviction that the ebbing away, both in spirit and in appearance, of the brightest past, sad as it must ever be, is not so sad a thing as the weak yearning which, in departing, it often leaves stranded on the soul, to cling to the appearance when the spirit is irrecoverably lost. There is no other great poet who thus redeems new ground for spiritual meditation from beneath the very sweep of the tides of the most engrossing affections, and quietly maintains it in possession of the musing intellect. There is no other but Wordsworth who has led us "to those sweet counsels between head and heart" which flash upon the absorbing emotions of the moment the steady light of a calm infinite world. None but Wordsworth has ever so completely transmuted by an imaginative spirit unsatisfied yearnings into eternal truth. No other poet ever brought out as he has done

"The soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering;"

or so tenderly preserved the

"wall-flower scents  
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride;"

or taught us how,

"By pain of heart, now checked, and now impelled,  
The intellectual power through words and things  
Went sounding on a dim and perilous way."

He has himself described this self-determination of his genius to "preserve and enlarge the *freedom in*

*himself*” in lines so beautiful, that, though I have already lingered long on this point, I cannot forbear quoting them :—

“ Within the soul a faculty abides  
That, with interpositions which would hide  
And darken, so can deal that they become  
Contingencies of pomp, and serve to exalt  
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,  
In the deep stillness of a summer even,  
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,  
Burns like an unconsuming fire of light  
In the green trees ; and, kindling on all sides  
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil  
Into a substance glorious as her own,  
Yea with her own incorporated, by power  
Capacious and serene. Like power abides  
In man’s celestial spirit ; virtue thus  
Sets forth and magnifies herself ; thus feeds  
A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire  
From the encumbrances of mortal life,  
From error, disappointment,—nay, from guilt ;  
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,  
From palpable oppressions of despair.” <sup>4</sup>

Of other poets, Tennyson alone may seem in some of his more thoughtful poems (the “*In Memoriam*” and “*The Two Voices*”) to have approached Wordsworth’s domain in employing the spiritual imagination to illuminate the moods of human emotion. In reality, however, even these poems are quite distinct in kind. They are more like glittering sparks flying upwards from the flames of self-consuming aspirations

<sup>4</sup> “*Excursion*,” book iv. p. 152.

than the quiet, steadfast, and spiritual lights of Wordsworth's insight.

But it is by no means principally in treating these deeper themes that Wordsworth brings the most of this conscious, voluntary, imaginative force to bear upon his subjects. All his most characteristic poems bear vivid traces of the same mental process. In his poems on subjects of natural beauty it is perhaps even more remarkable than in his treatment of mental subjects where this contemplative withdrawal from the immediate tyranny of a present emotion, in order to gain a higher point of view, seems more natural. But in all his most characteristic poems on nature there is just the same method ; first, a subjection of the mind to the scene or object of feeling studied ; then a withdrawing into his deeper self to exhaust its meaning. Thus, in the fine poems on Yarrow, the point of departure is the craving of the mind to see an object long ago painted in the imagination ; but instead of yielding to the current of that feeling, the poet checks himself, and asks whether the imaginative anticipation may not in itself be a richer wealth than any reality which could take its place :—

“ Let beeves and homebred kine partake  
 The sweets of Burn-mill meadow,  
 The swan on still St. Mary's Lake  
 Float double swan and shadow !  
 We will not see them, will not go  
 To-day, nor yet to-morrow :  
 Enough if in our hearts we know  
 There's such a place as Yarrow.

Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown !  
 It must, or we shall rue it ;  
 We have a vision of our own,—  
 Ah, why should we undo it ?  
 The treasured dreams of time long past,  
 We'll keep them, winsome Marrow ;  
 For when we're there, although 'tis fair,  
 'Twill be another Yarrow."

And in the same way, in the poem on "Yarrow visited," after brooding over its beauties, he puts them at a distance from him, to distinguish the influence of the "waking dream," "the image that hath perished," in helping him to see the reality: "I see, but not by sight alone, loved Yarrow, have I won thee." And then finally, in revisiting the same spot in old age, we have the first picture of the present; and, as the memory of the past, with its regrets, naturally follows, again the poet shakes himself free from this regret—the natural mood of the natural man, so to speak—in recognising the beauties of happier years, to win the higher spiritual insight that—

"the visions of the past  
*Sustain* the heart in feeling  
 Life as she is—our changeful life,  
 With friends and kindred dealing."

And he ends this most perfect triad of spiritual imaginations with the characteristic verse,—

"Flow on for ever, Yarrow stream,  
 Fulfil thy pensive duty,  
 Well pleased that future bards should chant  
 For simple hearts thy beauty ;



To dream-light dear while yet unseen,  
 Dear to the common sunshine,  
 And dearer still, as now I feel,  
 To memory's shadowy moonshine."

As more striking illustrations of the same poetic method—more striking simply because the subjects are apparently so purely descriptive that there would seem to be less room for this "sinking inward into himself from thought to thought"—I may recall those daffodils transfigured before the "inward eye, which is the bliss of solitude;" the cuckoo, which, though "babbling only to the vale of sunshine and of flowers," he spiritualises into a "wandering voice," that "tellest unto me a tale of visionary hours;" the mountain echo, which sends her "unsolicited reply" to the same babbling wanderer; the nut-laden hazel-branches, whose luxuriant feast first threw him into "that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay tribute to ease," and which then so "patiently gave up their quiet being," that, haunted by remorse, he is compelled to exclaim, "with gentle hand touch, for there is a spirit in the woods;" the daisy, that recalls him from "stately passions" to "the homely sympathy that heeds the common life our nature breeds;" and the mists, which "magnify and spread the glories of the sun's bright head." But there is no finer instance of Wordsworth's self-withdrawing mood in gazing at external things than that of the lines on the Boy of Windermere who mocked the owls. For real lovers of Wordsworth, these lines have effected more in helping them adequately to imagine the full depth of

the human imagination, and to feel the inexhaustible wealth of Nature's symbols, than any magnificence of storm or shipwreck or Alpine solitude :—

“ There was a boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs  
 And islands of Winander ! many a time  
 At evening, when the earliest stars began  
 To move along the edges of the hills,  
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone  
 Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake ;  
 And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
 Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth  
 Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,  
 That they might answer him ; and they would shout  
 Across the watery vale and shout again,  
 Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,  
 And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud  
 Redoubled and redoubled ; concourse wild  
 Of mirth and jocund din : and when it chanced  
 That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,  
 Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung  
 Listening, *a gentle shock of mild surprise*  
*Has carried far into his heart the voice*  
*Of mountain torrents ;* or the visible scene  
 Would enter unawares into his mind,  
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.”

No other poet but Wordsworth that the world ever produced could have written this ; you feel in reading it that the lines “ *a gentle shock of mild surprise has carried far into his heart the voice of mountain torrents,*” had for him an exactness as well as a fulness

of meaning ;—for he shows a curious power of carefully discriminating the *degrees* of depth in his poetic imaginations ; some lie near the surface ; others lie deeper, but still within the sphere of less meditative minds ; others spring from a depth far beyond the reach of any human soundings.

Again, the beauty of Wordsworth's little ballads is never properly understood by those who do not enter into the contemplative tone in which they are written. There is none of them that can be approached in a mood of *sympathetic* emotion without failing to produce its full effect. "Lucy Gray," for example, is a continual disappointment to those who look for an expression of the piteousness and desolation of the lost child's fate.<sup>5</sup> Wordsworth did not feel it thus ; he was contemplating a pure and lonely death as the natural completion of a pure and lonely life. He calls it not "Desolation," but "Solitude." He strikes the key-note of the poem in speaking of her in the first verse as "the solitary child," and then

"No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ;  
She dwelt on a wide moor,  
*The sweetest thing that ever grew*  
*Beside a human door."*

Wordsworth's purpose evidently was to paint a perfectly lovely solitary flower snapped, for its very purity, in its earliest bud, that it might remain an image of solitary beauty for ever. He *intended* to dissolve away

<sup>5</sup> Such as Mr. Kingsley, for instance, has so finely given in his ballad on the girl lost on the sands of Dee.

all pain and pity in the loveliness of the picture. It was not the lot of Lucy Gray, but the spiritualized meaning of that lot as it lived in his imagination, that he desired to paint. Again, in the exquisite ballad "We are seven," few discern how every touch throughout the whole is intended to heighten the contrast between the natural health and joy of life in the living child and the supernatural secret of death. It is not a mere tale of one little cottage girl, who could not conceive the full meaning of death: it is the poet's contemplative contrast between the rosy beauty and buoyant joyousness of children's life and the "incommunicable" sleep, which is the subject of the poem. The perfect art with which this is effected is seldom adequately observed. He introduces the living child with a glimpse of the inward brightness that childish health and beauty breathe around them:—

"She had a rustic woodland air,  
And she was wildly clad;  
Her hair was fair, and very fair:  
Her beauty made me glad."

And when he has drawn the picture of her eating her supper by the little graves of her brother and sister, that she may "sit and sing to them," he heightens the contrast yet more,—

"The first that died was little Jane:  
In bed she moaning lay,  
Till God released her of her pain,  
And then she went away.

So in the churchyard she was laid ;  
And when the grass was dry,  
*Together round her grave we played,*  
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,  
*And I could run and slide,*  
My brother John was forced to go,  
And he lies by her side."

Simple as this language is, it is not the language in which a child would have spoken. It is the language of a poet musing on the contrast between the little silent graves, changing with every season, freshening with the spring, wetted by the rain, and whitened by the winter's snow, like any other specks of common earth, and the buoyant child's unshaken fancy that they contain her sister and her brother still. So full is she of overflowing life herself, that though she can "run and slide," the whitened mounds still seem to her to hide a life as vivid as her own.

The voluntary element that I have noticed in Wordsworth's genius—the preference for checking obvious and natural currents of thought or feeling in order to brood over them meditatively and bring out a result of a higher order, leads to many of his imperfections as well as beauties. He had, as I have noticed, an eminently frugal mind. He liked of all things to make the most of the smaller subject before he gave himself up to the greater. The sober, sparing, free-will with which he gathers up the crumbs, and feeds his genius on them before he will break in on any whole loaf, is eminently characteristic of him. Emo-

tion does not hurry him into poetry nor into anything else. He "slackens his thoughts *by choice*,"<sup>6</sup> when they grow eager; he defers his feast of nuts that he may first enjoy expectation to the full; he will wear out the luxury of his imaginations of Yarrow before he tries the reality; he is more willing by far to wait for the due seasons of poetry than the husbandman for the due seasons of fruit:—

"His mind was keen,  
Intense, and frugal; apt for all affairs,  
And watchful more than ordinary men."<sup>7</sup>

The poem on the strawberry-blossom is right from the heart of his own nature:—

"That is work of waste and ruin:  
Do as Charles and I are doing.  
Strawberry-blossoms one and all,  
We must spare them—here are many.  
Look at it, the flower is small—  
Small and low, but fair as any;  
Do not touch it—summers two  
I am older, Anne, than you.  
\*      \*      \*      \*      \*  
Hither, soon as spring has fled,  
You and Charles and I will walk;  
Lurking berries ripe and red  
Then will hang on every stalk,  
Each within its leafy bower;  
And for that promise spare the flower."

And so Wordsworth himself would always have saved up his strawberry-blossoms of poetry till the "lurking

<sup>6</sup> "Prelude," book i.

<sup>7</sup> Michael.

berries ripe and red" lay in them, had he had the quick eye to distinguish surely between the unripe beauty and the ripe. But this he had not. As he himself tells us, he found it almost impossible to distinguish "a timorous capacity from prudence," "from circumspection, infinite delay." He had not that swiftness and fusion of nature which helps a man to distinguish at once the fruit of his lower from that of his higher moods. He gathered in

"the harvest of a quiet eye,  
That broods and sleeps on its own heart,"

with indiscriminating frugality, gathering in often both tares and wheat. It was that same voluntary character of his imaginative life, which enabled him to give so new an aspect to his themes, which also rendered him unable to distinguish with any delicacy between the various moods in which he wrote. A poet who is the mere instrument, as it were, of his own impulses of genius, knows when the influence is upon him; but a poet whose visionary mood is always half-voluntary, and a result of a gradual withdrawing of the mind into its deeper self, cannot well have the same quick vision for the boundary between commonplace and living imagination which belongs to natures of more spontaneous genius. Wordsworth seems to kindle his own poetic flame like a blind man kindling his own fire; and often, as it were, he goes through the process of lighting it without observing that the fuel is damp and has not caught the spark; and thus, though he has left us many a beacon of pure and everlasting glory flaming

from the hills, he has left us also many a monumental pile of fuel from which the poetic fire has early died away.

It is clear that Wordsworth as a poet did, as he tells us himself, "feel the weight of too much liberty." In his finest poem he declares—

"Me this unchartered freedom tires,  
I feel the weight of chance desires."

And no doubt he had even too complete a mastery over himself. He could not distinguish the *arbitrary* in his poetry from the conscious conquests of insight. And being, as we have seen, most frugal—feeling, as he did, to the very last day of his poetic life, that it was the greatest of impieties to "tax high Heaven with prodigality,"<sup>8</sup> he made not only the most of these "chance desires" or suggestions, but often *more* than the most, using them as the pedestals to thoughts in reality far too broad for them. It is the great defect of Wordsworth's poems, that where he has to deal with *circumstance* at all, he either gives it in all its baldness, or makes his meditations *overhang* it, like the projecting stories of old-fashioned houses, in which the basement is more costly than the air, and therefore is husbanded more carefully. To him the basement of circumstance was very costly, and the superinduced contemplation as abundant as the former was costly. Coleridge has criticised this tendency in Wordsworth to spread out a dome of thought over very insufficient supports of

<sup>8</sup> See the beautiful verses, "The unremitting voice of nightly streams," to which the date 1846 is attached.



fact, in accusing him of "thoughts and images too great for their subject." It is mistaken criticism, we think, to assert this, as Coleridge does, of any of his poems on Nature. The daisy and the daffodils breathed a buoyant joy and love into Wordsworth's simple nature which Coleridge could but half understand. The thoughts were not too great for the real influences they are capable of exerting. But to his poems on *incident*, Coleridge's charge is often perfectly applicable. The following criticism, for instance, contains a fair illustration of this tendency to erect a meditative dome over an inadequate pedestal. We quote from Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria":—

"The poet having gone out for a day's tour of pleasure, meets early in the morning with a knot of gipsies, who had pitched their blanket-tents and straw-beds, together with their children and asses, in some field by the road-side. At the close of the day, on his return, our tourist found them in the same place. 'Twelve hours,' says he,

'Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours are gone, while I  
Have been a traveller under open sky,  
Much witnessing of change and cheer;  
Yet as I left I find them here.'

Whereat the poet, without seeming to reflect that the poor tawny wanderers might probably have been tramping for weeks together through road and lane, over moor and mountain, and consequently must have been right glad to rest themselves, their children, and cattle for one whole day; and overlooking the obvious truth, that such repose might be quite as necessary for them as a walk of the same continuance was pleasing or healthful for the more fortunate poet,—expresses his indignation in a series of lines, the diction and imagery of which would have been rather above than below

the mark had they been applied to the immense empire of China, improgressive for thirty centuries:—

‘The weary sun betook himself to rest:—  
Then issued Vesper from the fulgent west,  
Outshining like a visible god,  
The glorious path in which he trod.  
And now ascending after one dark hour,  
And one night’s diminution of her power,  
Behold the mighty Moon! This way  
She looks, as if at them; but they  
Regard not her:—O, better wrong and strife,  
Better vain deeds or evil, than such life!  
The silent heavens have goings on;  
The stars have tasks;—but *these* have none.’”

There is no structural power in Wordsworth’s mind. When he has to deal with things, influences, living unities, he is usually opulent and at ease; for the natural emanations which flowers and mountains and children and simple rustic natures breathe around them are homogeneous in themselves, and only ask a poet who will open his whole spirit to them with steady contemplative eye, and draw in their atmosphere. But when much incident enters into poetry, the poet also needs high combining power; he needs the art of rapidly changing his mental attitude, and yet keeping the same tone and mood throughout; and to this the voluntary, frugal, contemplative character of Wordsworth’s intellectual nature is quite unequal. Wherever there is extended surface in his subject, there there is want of unity in the poem—inadequacy to blend a variety of elements into a single picture. There is no whole landscape in all Wordsworth’s ex-

quisite studies of nature. There is no variety of moral influences in all his many beautiful contemplations of character. There is no distinct centre of interest in any but his very simplest narratives. Indeed, he can deal with facts successfully only when they are simple enough to embody but a single idea: as in the case of Peter Bell and the Idiot Boy. If they have any character of *accident* about them, this reappears in his poems in all the accidental, discontinuous, and straggling form of its original existence. Almost any one of Wordsworth's fact-poems will immediately occur to the mind in illustration of this—"Simon Lee," "Alice Fell," the story of the traveller lost on Helvellyn, and many others. They are *anecdotes*, with passages often of surpassing beauty, but still untransmuted anecdotes,—here a bit of fact—there a gleam of natural loveliness—then a layer more of fact, and so forth. He neither throws himself into the narrative, so as to give you the active spirit of life inside it, as Scott did; nor does he give solely the contemplative view of it, as in his simplest ballads he can do with so much beauty; but he sprinkles a little macadam of stony fact along the fair upland path of his imagination. Thus, in the early editions of "The Thorn," he anxiously recorded the size of the infant's grave:—

"I've measured it from side to side,  
'Tis three feet long and two feet wide"

—inevitably suggesting that the poet was an undertaker calculating accurately the measure of the coffin.

Yet these spots of prosiness are eminently charac-

teristic of Wordsworth. He had vividly acute senses, and delighted in the mere physical use of them; they both relieved him from the strain of contemplation, and suggested new food for contemplation. "I speak," he says in the Prelude,

"in recollection of a time  
When the bodily eye—in every stage of life  
The most despotic of our senses—gained  
Such strength in *me*, as often held my mind  
In absolute dominion. . . .  
I roam'd from hill to hill, from rock to rock,  
Still craving combination of new forms;  
New pleasure; wider empire for the sight,  
Proud of her own endowments; and *rejoiced*  
*To lay the inner faculties asleep.*"

The truth of this statement is obvious to any one who reads his earliest poems; and these vivid senses continued to the last to work quite in separation from the poetic spirit within him; so that no poet gives us so strong a feeling of the contrast between the inward and the outward as Wordsworth; he *dives* into himself between his respirations, that he may exclude for a little while the tyranny of the senses, and so not waste his life in the mere animal pleasure of breathing. A geometrician would say, that while most other poetry moves on the plane of life, Wordsworth's is poetry of double curvature, and winds in and out continually beneath and above it. One of Wordsworth's biographers states, that the sense of hearing was the finest sense Wordsworth had, and gave rise to the finest poetry of Nature he ever wrote. The latter

statement is, I think, true ; but the inference from it, that the ear was the finest of Wordsworth's senses, is probably an error. There is no indication that he had any fine faculty for music ; and I think the reasoning by which it was inferred that he had, is probably almost an inversion of the truth. It is because the ear cannot and does not fill and distract the contemplative mind so much as the eye,—because sound appeals directly to the interpreting spirit, and has so little substantive significance of its own,—that Wordsworth's poetry on sounds has, perhaps, less discontinuity, more fusion, than his poetry on sight. Vision absorbed him, and would not allow his "inward eye" to see until sight was exchanged for memory ; and even then his poems on visible things have two distinct portions—the descriptive portion, or the strophe dedicated to the eye, and the meditative antistrophe, which belongs to the mind. But when he listened, the sound only served to keep his mind fixed on a single centre, while it allowed him full scope for free meditation. It was not easy for him to macadamise his poetry with little abrupt matter-of-fact sounds. There is no poem like that "To the Cuckoo"—of all his poems Wordsworth's own darling. Whether "through water, earth, and air, the soul of happy sound was spread," or the "far-distant hills into the tumult sent an alien sound of melancholy not unnoticed," there was in Sound ever expression enough to stir the depths of Wordsworth's watchful heart without enslaving his senses.

But it is by no means due only to the imperfect

unity between Wordsworth's spirit and senses, and his disposition to save up all he saw for his poetry just as he saw it, that these little constant specks of incongruous material so often annoy us; the same thing occurs almost as often in his meditative poems. There was a rigidity in his mind, the offspring probably of the intense meditation he was wont to concentrate on single centres of thought. Hazlitt has thus finely described the general expression of his personal appearance:—

“The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don-Quixote like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge, in his gait, not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense high narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits; but he was teased into making it regular and heavy. Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down, and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*, like the crust on wine.”

Clearly in Wordsworth, as well as in Peter Bell, there were many of

“The unshaped half-human thoughts  
Which solitary nature feeds  
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice.”

One half applies to him that fine verse—

“There was a hardness in his cheek,  
There was a hardness in his eye,  
As though the man had fixed his face  
In many a solitary place  
Against the wind and open sky.”

Indeed, he expressly tells us that this tendency to hardness was the leaning of his mind ; but that he had been led to more delicate and sensitive thoughts by his sister's influence—

“She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,  
And humble cares, and delicate fears;  
A heart the fountain of sweet tears,  
And love, and thought, and joy.”

The natural rigidity of his mind was great, and hence, probably, his great deficiency in humour, which cannot exist without a certain flexibility of both feeling and thought, allowing of rapid transitions from one point of view to another. It was not only that he had “fixed his face in many a solitary place, against the wind and open sky,” but in the intellectual spaces it was the same. Against the infinite solitudes of the eternal world he had intently fixed his spirit, till it too had something of the rigid attitude of the mystic, and was crossed at times by the dark spots which constant gazing at a great brightness will always produce. He paid for the frequency of

“that blessed mood  
In which the burden of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world  
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,  
Until the breath of this corporeal frame,  
And even the motion of our human blood,  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul ;  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things”—

—he paid for the frequency of this mood by a want of ease and delicacy in the lesser movements of his intellectual nature, which rendered him often unable to bring the minutiae even of his finest poems into harmony with their spirit. Thus he often mistook the commonplace observations of his superficial understanding for the deeper thoughts of his heart ; he had no living feeling that told him when he was dividing things with the blunt edge of common sense, and when he was wielding that fine sword of the imagination by which to the discerning eye the poet divides asunder soul and spirit as surely as that greater sword divides for judgment. He would rise and fall in the same poem from clear vision to the obscure gropings of common sense—from obscure gropings to clear vision—and not feel the incongruity. No one can help shrinking at the sudden discord, when, in the lovely poem, “She was a phantom of delight,” we read—



“And now I see with eyes serene  
 The very pulse of the *machine*,  
 A being breathing thoughtful breath,  
 A traveller between life and death.”

It is a jar to the mind, like coming down three steps without notice, to stumble over this “machine” in the midst of such a poem; you think of an automaton at once, or of Madame Tussaud’s breathing figure. There are numbers of gritty little poems completely written in this machine-mood; but the trial is severe when such a crag starts up to bruise you in the midst of perfect loveliness. We should not grumble if that “worthy short-lived youth” commemorated in one of his sonnets, had been thus spoken of as a superseded mechanism; but that “a dancing shape, an image gay,” should be associated with any notion of the kind, suggests a meaning for the exquisite line “to haunt, to startle, and waylay,” the farthest possible, we should imagine, from the mind of the poet in writing it.

Many of these small discords which interrupt the harmony of Wordsworth’s poetry are due to the egotism by which a man of moods so solitary and of genius so decisive was almost necessarily haunted. The smallest memoranda of his own mind or life he will often preserve in his poetry, with a kind of blind faith that they have a universal meaning. Thus, in one of his sonnets, he tells us elaborately how he gazed one day at the sea, and saw many ships, and his mind gradually began to take a particular interest in one of them, and how this one sailed northwards.

One of his most thoughtful admirers suggested that this sonnet was perhaps trivial; but Wordsworth confuted her in a long letter, in which he proved that the sonnet was a poetic illustration of a universal law of mind, by virtue of which man must either find or make a unity in all that he contemplates; and if there be no determining reason, then the "liberty of indifference," as the metaphysicians call it, will come into play, and he will select a unit of thought arbitrarily, as the poet here chose for special interest a special ship, of which he truly observes, that she "was naught to me, nor I to her." "I must say," says Wordsworth of this gently remonstrant admirer, "that even she has something yet to receive from me. I say this with confidence, from her thinking that I have fallen below myself in the sonnet beginning, 'With ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh.'" It might be replied, perhaps, that the same reasoning would prove him to be justified in using poetry to illustrate the simple conversion of propositions, or in writing a touching sonnet on the "Illicit process of the Major." The best and even the most poetical defence we can make for such caprices is, that they are venial egotisms; for it is certainly more poetic to exhibit life—even egotistic life—in any fashion, than to illustrate merely *formal* laws. I should not have alluded to this at all, but that Hazlitt has set up a theory, founded in some measure, perhaps, on these little personal egotisms, to prove that Wordsworth's poetic power is born of egotism, and is part and parcel of his complete *want* of universality.

“Mr. Wordsworth is the last man to ‘look abroad into universality,’ if that alone constituted genius: he looks at home into himself, and is ‘content with riches fineless.’ He would in the other case be ‘poor as winter,’ if he had nothing but general capacity to trust to. He is the greatest, that is, the most original poet of the present day, only because he is the greatest egotist. He is ‘self-involved, not dark.’ He sits in the centre of his own being, and there ‘enjoys bright day.’ He does not waste a thought on others. Whatever does not relate exclusively and wholly to himself, is foreign to his views. He contemplates a whole-length figure of himself, he looks along the unbroken line of his personal identity. He thrusts aside all other objects, all other interests, with scorn and impatience, that he may repose on his own being; that he may dig out the treasures of thought contained in it; that he may unfold the precious stores of a mind for ever brooding over itself. His genius is the effect of his individual character. He stamps that character—that deep individual interest—on whatever he meets. The object is nothing but as it furnishes food for internal meditation, for old associations. If there had been no other being in the universe, Mr. Wordsworth’s poetry would have been just what it is. . . . With a mind averse from outward objects, but ever intent upon its own workings, he hangs a weight of thought and feeling upon every trifling circumstance connected with his past history. The note of the cuckoo sounds in his ear like the voice of other years; the daisy spreads its leaves in the rays of boyish delight that stream from his thoughtful eyes; the rainbow lifts its proud arch in heaven but to mark his progress from infancy to manhood; an old thorn is buried, bowed down under the mass of associations he has wound about it; and to him, as he himself beautifully says,

‘The meanest flow’r that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.’”

Hazlitt’s malicious genius delighted in this kind of

thorny praise. His criticisms are generally full of insight ; and come short of the truth mainly from the deep scepticism which always leaves him perfectly contented with his own paradox. He has no conviction that apparent paradox is not real. He is quite willing to believe that mere egotism can be the root of genius or of anything else that is noble, and is not driven back to his facts by any aversion to so startling a conclusion. He tells us further on, that Wordsworth's "strength, as it often happens, arises from excess of weakness." This is but the sceptic's bitter version of the truth, that "weakness constantly arises from excess of strength;" a form of the proposition not only more true in itself, but far more applicable to Wordsworth's poetry. Rare gifts of mind almost always tend to some overbalance of habit, or thought, or feeling—to some narrowness, pride, or humour, that is in itself a weakness. But no weakness ever *of itself* tends to an opposite strength, even though, as Wordsworth so finely observes in a passage I have already quoted, the free and voluntary wisdom of man may transmute it into an occasion for developing the highest strength ; but this is through the supernatural life, not through any natural gravitation of weakness towards its opposite. Strong affections may tend to feebleness of purpose, but not feebleness of purpose to strong affections. Great contemplative power will tend to self-occupation, but self-occupation does not tend to contemplative power. Hazlitt saw that the egotism and the genius in Wordsworth were closely related, and with half-malicious pleasure hastily as-

sumed that the worse quality had the deeper root. When he says that Wordsworth's poetry is mainly derived from "looking at home into himself," he says what I have all along endeavoured to establish; but when he *means* by this the contradictory of "looking abroad into universality," he is certainly and wilfully wrong. There are two selves in every man—the private and the universal;—the source of personal crotchets, and the humanity that is our bond with our fellow-men, and gives us our influence over them. Half Wordsworth's weakness springs from the egotistical self, as he himself applies when he says,

"Or is it that when human souls a journey long have had,  
And are returned into themselves, they cannot but be sad?"<sup>9</sup>

But all his power springs from the universal self. Nor is it in the least true that Wordsworth's finest poems, as Hazlitt implies, are cocoons of arbitrary personal associations, spun around local and accidental centres. The worst element in Wordsworth is the arbitrary and occasional element. Freedom, indeed, enters into his very finest poems,—but thoughtful, not arbitrary freedom; he draws us out of the natural currents of thought and emotion: but if it be from "chance desires," if it be to have us "all to himself," and give us an egotistic lecture in his own little study,—he is as far as possible from his true poetic mood.

It is in order to put us into communication with a part of his nature which has a feebler counterpart in ourselves,—to give us the joy of feeling latent intel-

<sup>9</sup> Star-gazers,—*"Poetical Works,"* vol. ii.

lectual powers quickened into conscious energy,—that, in his finer poems, he gently intrudes upon us his own higher imaginative life. It is an egotism, no doubt, when he ends a fine poem with the verse—

“ Matthew is in his grave ; yet now  
Methinks I see him stand,  
As at that moment, with a bough  
Of wilding in his hand.”

But it is not an egotism to tell us, as he does in the Prelude—

“ O, when I have hung  
Above the raven’s nest, by knots of grass  
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock,  
But ill-sustained, and almost (so it seemed <sup>10</sup>)  
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,  
Shouldering the naked crag,—O, at that time,  
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
Blow through my ear ! the sky seemed not a sky  
Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds !”

The difference lies in this, that in the former case the statement is a bare individual experience—which adds nothing to the living expression of the poem—the bough of “wilding” being entirely an “accidental grace”—while the whole verse breaks the unity of the subject by its abrupt transition to a different period and point of view ; whereas the latter, though also a personal memory, paints to the very life that fresh wonder which the excitement of a little physical dan-

<sup>10</sup> Unless, indeed, this pedantic accuracy as to insignificant fact (not unusual in Wordsworth) be an egotism.

ger will spread for any watching eye over the whole face of heaven and earth. There is no egotism or caprice in delineating personal experience that helps to widen or renew the whole experience of others. Wordsworth was much excited on one occasion, at being told he had written a poem on "*a daisy*." "No," he said, "it was on *the daisy*—a very different thing." There *was* a difference, and it was a difference characteristic of his best poetry. His finest mood never descends to local or personal accidents alien to the experience or imagination of his readers. Coleridge truly says in one of his lectures, that Shakespeare never copied a character from a mere individual—never painted a unique character at all; each of his characters might represent a whole class; and so too, in his very different world, all Wordsworth's higher poems have a certain breadth of life and influence, without any of the abstractness which, in inferior poets, accompanies breadth.

In what then, may one say, in answer to Hazlitt's criticism, that Wordsworth's universality consists, if high universal intelligence is to be found in his poems? Not in any power of elaborating what is usually understood by universal truth: indeed, for so contemplative a poet, there is singularly little of the comprehensive grasp of Reason in his mind. Still less in any remarkable power of expressing universal emotions, though Hazlitt does regard him as essentially lyrical. His especial poetic faculty lies, I think, in contemplatively seizing the characteristic individual *influences* which all living things, from the very

smallest of earth or air up to man and the Spirit of God, radiate around them to every mind that will surrender itself to their expressive power. It is not true that Wordsworth's genius lay mainly in the region of *mere* Nature;—rather say it lay in detecting Nature's influences just at the point where they were stealing unobserved into the very essence of the human soul. Nor is this all. His characteristic power lay no less in discovering divine influences, as they fall like dew upon the spirit. One may say that Wordsworth's poetry is fed on sympathy *less*, and on influences from *natures differing in kind* from his own *more*, than any other poetry in the world; and that he delineates these influences just as they are entering into the very substance of humanity. Strike out the human element from his Nature poems, and they lose all their meaning: he did not paint Nature, like Tennyson; he arrested and interpreted its *spiritual expressions*. He regarded other men chiefly as natural influences acting on himself; but he never was inclined to identify Nature with either Man or God; for freedom, immortality, and a spiritual God were of the very essence of his own meditative world. He is not specifically the poet of Nature, nor the poet of Man, nor the poet of Truth, nor the poet of Religion; he is the poet of all separate *living emanations* from Nature, or from man or God. Contemplative as he is, his mind was too concentrated and intense for general Truth. He fixed his imagination and his life too entirely and intensely on single centres of influence. He could not pass from the one to the other, and grasp many at once, so



as to discern their mutual *relations*, in the discrimination of which Truth consists. He kept to single influences: solitary contemplative communion with all forms of life which did not disturb the contemplative freedom of his spirit, was his strength. His genius was universal, but was not comprehensive; it did not hold many things, but it held much. You see this especially in his larger poems: he is like one of his own "bees that murmur by the hour in foxglove-bells." He cannot move gradually through a train of thought or a consecutive narrative. He flies from bell to bell, and sucks all the honey deliberately out of each. Hence he was so fond of the sonnet, because it was just suited to embody one thought; yet it seldom exhausted for him one subject, and there is often an injury to his genius in the transition from sonnet to sonnet when he wrote a series on one theme. His "plain imagination and severe," as he himself called it, isolated whatever it dealt with, brought it into immediate contact with his own spirit, and so drew from it slowly and patiently every drop of sweet or sad or stern influence that it had the power to give off. But it is with him consciously *influence*, and influence only. He never humanises the spirits of natural objects, as Shelley did. He puts no fairy into the flower,—no dryad into the tree,—no nymph into the river;—he is too much of a realist for that, and he has far too intense a consciousness of the simple magnificence of moral freedom. Indeed he has too strict a *human* centre of contemplation for that to be possible. He regards Nature as a tributary to Man, sending him influences

and emanations which pass into the very essence of his life, but never constitute that life. These influences are not like in *kind* to humanity. To liken them to higher beings is but to find "loose types of things through all degrees;" and when he addresses the river thus—

"O glide, fair stream, for ever glide,  
*Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,*  
 Till all our minds for ever flow  
 As thy deep waters now are flowing,"

there is not even a momentary attempt to abstract from the visible water, and bestow a human "soul" upon the river; he only gathers up the spiritual influences which emanate from it into a living centre, just as he elsewhere spreads abroad the "soul of happy sound" through earth and air. He has the deepest conviction that different objects and scenes do radiate specific influences of their own, not dependent merely on the mood of the contemplative observer:—

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,  
 His daily teachers had been woods and rills,  
 The silence that is in the starry sky,  
 The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

But these radiated influences are never human till they touch the human soul, and are transmuted by that touch. Rich and almost infinite streams of power and beauty Nature does pour into Man; but first when they reach that free and solitary spirit which draws down other and higher influences to meet them from God, do they fulfil their simple destiny. If any one chooses to deny

that there is an absolute reality in the expressions of Nature to human minds,—that they are something as unalterable as the meaning of a smile or a frown,—he may and must say with Hazlitt that Wordsworth “never looks abroad into universality,” but overwhelms natural objects with the weight of his own arbitrary associations. If the dancing daffodils are no real image of simple joy,—if the “power of hills” be a vague and misleading metaphor,—if the “welcome snow-drop”—

“That child of winter, prompting thoughts that climb  
From desolation towards the genial prime”—

can tell no true tale of immortality to the simple-hearted when sinking beneath the snows of age; if it be a mere confusion of ideas for a poet to believe

“That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved  
To blend his murmurs with my nurse’s song;  
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,  
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice  
*That flowed along my dreams;*”

if there be nothing ghostly in the yew-tree, no “witchery” in the sky, and no eternal voices in the sea; if, in a word, “the invisible things of Him from the creation” are *not* “clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,”—then indeed was Wordsworth “vain in his imagination,” and “his foolish heart was darkened.”

But Wordsworth did not doubt about these things; he *knew* them; and he knew too well the kind of human character they served to make or mar. His own nature was of this primitive humanity:—

“ Long have I loved what I behold—  
 The night that calms, the day that cheers;  
 The common growth of mother earth  
 Suffices me—her tears her mirth,  
 Her humblest mirth and tears.”

He knew how these simple influences could not be received into the heart without receiving also

“ a spirit strong,  
 That gives to all the selfsame bent  
 Where life is wise and innocent;”

he knew that no heart which “ watches and receives ” what quiet Nature gives, can have any of the pre-occupying restlessness which evil brings; he knew that he

“ Who affronts the eye of solitude, shall learn  
 That her mild nature can be terrible.”

And thus we have a set of characters of simple grain, all of them fed by the life of Nature, but all religious, spiritual and free,—in Michael, the Leech-gatherer, and the Wanderer in “ The Excursion; ” while we have Peter Bell, and, in part, the Solitary, on the other hand, whose personal strength had been spent in “ affronting the eye of solitude.”

The result of almost all Wordsworth’s universal experience of the influences of Nature acting *alone* on man is gathered up into his three poems, “ Lucy,” “ Ruth,” and “ The Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle ” (the last, perhaps, the most perfect effort of his genius): the first containing his conception of the plastic influences of Nature in moulding us into

beauty; the second, of her exciting spells for awakening the passions; the last, of her tranquilising influences on thought. If we take with these the poem on the lonely Leech-gatherer, in which he contrasts the instinctive joy and life of Nature with the burden of human free-will; the great "Ode on Immortality," in which he brings natural life into contrast with the supernatural, speaking of "those high instincts before which our mortal nature doth tremble like a guilty thing surprised;" and finally, the lines in which he draws together Nature, free-will, and God into one of the sublimest poems of our language, the "Ode to Duty,"—we have in essence nearly all the truth that Wordsworth anxiously gleaned from a life of severe meditation, though a very slight epitome indeed of the innumerable living influences from which that truth was learned. If any one doubts the real affinity between the expressions written on the face of Nature and those human expressions which so early interpret themselves to even infants that to account for them except as a natural language seems impossible, the exquisite poem on "Lucy" ought to convert him. The contrast it illustrates between Wordsworth's faith in real emanations from all living or unliving "mute insensate" things, and the humanised "spirits" of life in the Greek mythological poetry, is very striking. Influences come from all these living objects, but personified influences never.

"Three years she grew in sun and shower;  
Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower  
On earth was never sown.

This child I to myself will take,  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of my own.

Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse; and with me  
The girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn  
Or up the mountain springs;  
And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her; for her the willows bend:  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Even in the motion of the storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form  
By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round;  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height—  
Her virgin bosom swell:  
These thoughts to Lucy I will give,  
When she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell.'

Thus Nature spake—the work was done.  
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!  
 She died; and left to me  
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene,  
 This memory of what hath been  
 And never more will be."

Of the poetry of Wordsworth, that cannot, perhaps ever be said which Wordsworth truly said of Burns, that "deep in the general heart of man his power survives;" for *his* is the poetry of solitude, and the "general heart of man" cannot bear to be alone. But there are some solitudes that cannot be evaded.

"Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills  
 The generations are prepared; the pangs,  
 The internal pangs, are ready—the dread strife  
 Of poor humanity's afflicted will,"—

—and then we leave the greatest poets of the great world, and look to one who was ever glad to gaze into the deepest depths of his own heart, of Nature, and of God. "The pangs, the internal pangs," were not ready for *him*. "Bright, solemn, and serene," perhaps he alone, of all the great men of that day, had seen the light of the countenance of God shining clear into the face of duty:—

"Stern Lawgiver! Yet thou dost wear  
 The Godhead's most benignant grace;  
 Nor know we anything so fair  
 As is the smile upon thy face.  
 Flowers laugh before thee in their beds:  
 And fragrance in thy footing treads,

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
And the most ancient Heavens through thee are fresh and  
strong."

And therefore in his poems there will ever be a spring  
of something even fresher than poetic life—a pure,  
deep well of solitary joy.





V.

GEORGE ELIOT.

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THE great authoress who calls herself George Eliot is chiefly known, and no doubt deserves to be chiefly known, in England, as a novelist, but she is certainly much more than a novelist in the sense in which that word applies even to writers of great genius, to Miss Austen, or Mr. Trollope,—nay, much more than a novelist in the sense in which that word applies to Miss Brontë, or even to Thackeray, though it is of course true in relation to all these writers, that besides being much more, she is also, and necessarily, not so much. What is remarkable in George Eliot is the striking combination in her of very deep speculative power with a very great and realistic imagination. It is rare to find an intellect so skilled in the analysis of the deepest psychological problems, so completely at home in the conception and delineation of real characters. George Eliot discusses the practical influences acting on men and women, I do not say with the *ease*

of Fielding,—for there is a touch of carefulness, often of over-carefulness in all she does,—but with much of his breadth and spaciousness,—the breadth and spaciousness, one must remember, of a man who had seen London life in the capacity of a London police magistrate. Nay, her imagination has, I do not say of course the fertility, but something of the range and the delight in rich historic colouring, of Sir Walter Scott's, while it combines with it something too of the pleasure in ordered learning, and the laborious marshalling of the picturesque results of learning,—though her learning is usually in a very different field,—which gives the flavour of scholastic pride to the great genius of Milton. Not that I think George Eliot's fine verse entitles her to be described as a poet, though the poetic side of her mind has been deep enough and true enough to lend richness, depth, and harmony to her romances. I am only pointing out now how much she is besides a novelist,—how inevitable it was that in her novels she should range far beyond the region of the most successful novelists of recent times,—far beyond that little world of English society which has determined for novelists of the most different type of genius,—for Miss Austen, for Mrs. Gaskell, for Mr. Trollope, for Thackeray, and for many less successful, but still very successful contemporaries,—their peculiar field of work.

It is, indeed, a great help towards understanding her true genius to compare George Eliot with the school of society-novelists of whom I have spoken. What one remarks about the works of those who have

studied any particular society as a whole far more deeply than they have studied the individual characters in it, is that their creations all stand on one level, are delineated, with great accuracy, down to the same not very considerable depth, and no further ; that all, in short, are bas-reliefs cut out on the same surface. The novelists of this school are perfectly inexhaustible in resource on the special social ground they choose, and quite incapable of varying it. And all of them disappoint us in not giving more insight into those deeper roots of character which lie beneath the social surface. Probably the mobile sympathies which are so essential to artists of this class, and the faculty of readily realising, and of being easily satisfied with realising, the workings of other minds, are to some extent inconsistent with that imaginative intensity and tenacity which is needful for the deeper insight into human character. Certainly the accomplished artists I have named carve out their marvellously life-like groups in a very shallow though sufficiently plastic material. How perfect and how infinitely various are the images left on the mind by the characters in Miss Austen's novels! Lord Macaulay has expressed just admiration of the skill which could paint four young clergymen, "all belonging to the upper part of the middle class, all liberally educated, all under the restraints of the same sacred profession, all young, all in love, all free from any disposition to ride a special hobby, and all without a ruling passion," without making them insipid likenesses of each other. And no doubt this does show great power ; but it is equally

remarkable that all of them are drawn just to the same depth, all delineated out of the same social elements. None of their minds are exhibited in any direct contact with the ultimate realities of life; none of them are seen grasping at the truth by which they seek to live, struggling with a single deadly temptation,—or, in short, with any of the deeper elements of human life. The same may almost be said of Thackeray's, Mr. Trollope's, and Mrs. Gaskell's sketches. These authors, indeed, sometimes probe the motives of their leading characters, but they generally report that at a very small depth below the surface the analysis fails to detect any certain result. The whole graphic effect of their art is produced with scarcely any disturbance of the smooth surface of social usage. The artist's graver just scratches off the wax in a few given directions till the personal bias of taste and bearing is sufficiently revealed, while the pervading principle of the society in which the artist lives is strictly preserved.

It was very different with Miss Brontë. Her imagination was not, and under the circumstances of her life could not have been, at home with the light play of social influences. There is even an abruptness of outline, a total want of social cohesion among her characters. They are sternly drawn, with much strong shading, and kept in isolated spheres. They break, or rather burst, in upon each other, when they exert mutual influences at all, with a rude effort, that is significant enough of the shyness of a solitary creative imagination. Still, for this very reason, what characters Miss Brontë does conceive truly, she reveals much

more deeply than the society-novelists of whom I have been speaking. She has no familiarity with the delicate touches and shades by which they succeed in conveying a distinct impression without laying bare the deeper secrets of character. She has not, like them, any power of giving in her delineations *traces* of thought and feeling which lie beyond her actual grasp. She has a full and conscious hold of all the moods she paints; and though her paintings are in nine cases out of ten far less lifelike, yet *when* lifelike they are far more profoundly imagined than those of Mr. Trollope, Miss Austen, Mrs. Gaskell or even Thackeray himself. There is as little common life, diffused atmosphere of thought, and there are as few connecting social ideas, amongst the various figures in Miss Brontë's tales as is possible to conceive among fellow-men and fellow-countrymen. But what personal life there is, is of the deepest sort, though it is apt to be too exceptional and individual, and too little composed out of elements of universal experience.

The novelists of the society-school, who delineate not so much individual figures as a complete phase of society, have what one may call a *medium* ready to their hand in which to trace the characteristic features of the natures they delineate. They have a familiar world of manners to paint, in which a modulation, an omission, or an emphasis here and there, are quite sufficient to mark a character, or indicate a latent emotion. Not so an author who, like Miss Brontë, endeavoured to fit all her characters with a new and appropriate outward manner of their own as distinct

and special as the inward nature it expressed. With her there was necessarily a *directness* of delineation, a strong downrightness in the drawing which is in very marked contrast with the method that charms us so much in the pictures of Miss Austen and her modern successors. Much of the art of the drawing-room novelists consists in the indirectness, the allusiveness, the educated reticence of the artists. They portray a society; they *indicate* an individuality. They delight in fine strokes; they will give a long conversation which scarcely advances the narrative at all, for the sake of a few delicate touches of shade or colour on an individual character. In the power to paint this play of common social life, in which there are comparatively but few key-notes of distinct personality, the charm of this school of art consists; while Miss Brontë's lay in the Rembrandt-like distinctness with which all that the mind conceived was brought into the full blaze of light, and the direct vigor with which all the prominent features were marked out.

George Eliot as a novelist has points of connection with both of these schools of art, beside some characteristics peculiarly her own. There is the same flowing ease of manner, clearness of drawing, delicacy of finish, and absence of excitement, which characterise the modern semi-satirical school. But there is less of play in the surface-painting,—more of depth in the deeper characters imagined,—a broader touch, a stronger, directer fashion of delineation,—less of manner-paintings, and more of the bare naturalism of human life. On the other hand, there is nothing

of the Rembrandt-like style of Miss Brontë: the light flows more equally over George Eliot's pictures; one finds nothing of the irregular emphasis with which Currer Bell's characters are drawn, or of the strong subjective colouring which tinges all her scenes. George Eliot's imagination, like Miss Brontë's, loves to go to the roots of character, and portrays best by broad direct strokes; but there the likeness between them, so far as there is any, ends. The reasons for the deeper method and for the directer style are hardly likely to have been similar in the two cases. Miss Brontë can scarcely be said to have had any large instinctive knowledge of human nature:—her own life and thoughts were exceptional, cast in a strongly-marked but not very wide mould; her imagination was solitary; her experience was very limited; and her own personality tinged all she wrote. She "made out" the outward life and manner of her *dramatis personæ* by the sheer force of her own imagination; and as she always imagined the will and the affections as the substance and centre of her characters, those of her delineations which are successful at all are deep, and their manner broad.

George Eliot's genius is exceedingly different. Her genial, broad delineations of human life have, as I said just now, more perhaps of the breadth of Fielding than of any of the manners-painters of the present day. For these imagine life only as it appears in a certain dress and sphere, which are a kind of artificial medium for their art,—life as affected by drawing-rooms. George Eliot has little, if any, of their capacity for

catching the under-tones and allusive complexity of this sort of society. She has, however, observed the phases of a more natural and straightforward class of life, and she draws her external world as much as possible from observation—though some of her Florentine pictures must have been suggested more by literary study than by personal experience—instead of *imagining* it, like Miss Brontë, out of the heart of the characters she wishes to paint. The English manners she delights in are chiefly of the simplest and most homely kind,—of the rural farmers and labourers,—of the half-educated portion of the country middle-class, who have learnt no educated reticence,—and of the resident country gentry and clergy in their relations with these rough-mannered neighbours. This is a world in which she could not but learn a direct style of treatment. The habit of concealing, or at most of suggesting rather than downright expressing, what is closest to our hearts, is, as we know, a result of education. It is quite foreign to the class of people whom George Eliot knows most thoroughly, and has drawn with the fullest power. All her deepest knowledge of human nature has probably been acquired among people who speak their thoughts with the directness, though not with the sharp metallic ring, of Miss Brontë's Yorkshire heroes. But instead of almost luxuriating, as Miss Brontë appears to do, in the startling emphasis of this mannerism, and making all her characters precipitate themselves in speech in the way best calculated to give a strongly-marked picture of the conception in her own brain,—George Eliot has



evidently delighted to note all the varieties of form which varying circumstances give to these direct and simple manners, and takes as much pleasure in painting their different shades as Miss Austen does in guiding her more elaborate conversations to and fro so as to elicit traits of personal character. Directness of delineation is, indeed, evidently natural to the author of "*Adam Bede*," but it has no tendency whatever to take, with her, that form of concentrated intensity which it assumed in Miss Brontë: her style has all the general composure and range of tone of the life she paints, and shows her as much in sympathy with the dumb and stolid phases of rural society as with its more active forms. There was something of the poet in both. But George Eliot's poetry is rooted in the more intellectual emotions, Miss Brontë's was in the most personal. George Eliot's poetic tendencies are rather of the kind to soften outlines and harmonize the effects of her pictures. Miss Brontë's, on the other hand, were adapted to express the passion of her own imagination; and while the effect was graphic and unique, it was monotonous, and not unfrequently unreal.

George Eliot's pictures are not only directer and simpler than those of the drawing-room novelists, but her deeper and frequently poetic imagination discriminates finely betwixt the various degrees of depth which she gives to her characters, and throws more of universality and breadth into them. The manners of "good society" are a kind of social costume or disguise, which is, in fact, much more effective in

concealing how much of depth ordinary characters have, and in restraining the expression of universal human instincts and feelings, than in hiding the individualities, the distinguishing inclinations, talents, bias, and tastes of those who assume them. The slight restraints which are imposed by society upon the expression of individual bias are, in fact, only a new excitement to its more subtle and various, though less straightforward, development. Instead of speaking itself simply out, it gleams out in a hundred ways by the side-paths of a more elaborate medium. To avail yourself skilfully of all the opportunities which these social manners admit of *being yourself*, adds a fresh, though very egotistic, interest to life, and gives much of the zest to the sort of study in which Thackeray and Mr. Trollope are the acknowledged masters. But this applies only to the lighter and more superficial part of human personality. Those stronger passions and emotions in which all men share more or less deeply ; which are in the strictest sense personal, and yet in the strictest sense universal ; which are private, because either the objects or the occasions which excite them most deeply are different for every different person, and universal, because towards some objects, or on some occasions, they are felt alike by all ;—these most personal and most widely diffused of all the elements of human nature are sedulously suppressed in cultivated society ; and even the most skilful of the drawing-room novelists find little room for delineating the comparative depth of their roots in different minds.

And yet these deepest portions of human character, which the simpler and less educated grades of society, in their comparative indifference to the sympathy they receive, do not care to hide, and which educated society half suppresses, or expresses only by received formulas quite without personal significance, are far truer measures of force and mass in human character than any other elements. They are, in fact, the only *common* measures which are applicable to all in nearly equal degree. After all, what we care chiefly to know of men and women, is not so much their special tastes, bias, gifts, humours, or even the exact proportions in which these characteristics are combined,—as the general depth and mass of the human nature that is in them,—the breadth and the power of their life,—its comprehensiveness of grasp, its tenacity of instinct, its capacity for love, its need of trust. A thousand skilful outlines of character based on mere individualities of taste and talent and temper, are not near as moving to us as one vivid picture of a massive nature stirred to the very depths of its commonplace instinct and commonplace faith. And the means of studying these broader aspects of human life are much fewer in the educated society which Miss Austen and Thackeray draw, than in the country-towns, mills, and farm-houses, which are dotted about George Eliot's "Scenes from Clerical Life," "Silas Marner," and her more elaborate English tales.

In the depth, force, and thorough naturalness of the human characteristics in the delineation of which she delights, George Eliot is not superior to Miss

Brontë, who never fails to give us a distinct measure of the instinctive tenderness, depth of affection, and energy of will, of her creations. But in breadth of range George Eliot is far beyond Currer Bell. Intensity is the main characteristic of the authoress of "Jane Eyre." She cannot paint quiet massive strength, still less, easy, composed, and inert natures. George Eliot enters into these with even more insight than into the more concentrated. Eager prejudice, dumb pain, the passive famine of inarticulate desires, are painted by both authors with marvellous and almost equal power; but George Eliot has the wider and more tranquil sympathies; and sometimes almost seems to rival Sir Walter Scott in the art of delineating the repose of strong natures and the effortless strength they put forth.

Again, in one field—the field of religious faith—the author of "Adam Bede" and "Romola" shows much broader insight than any of the writers I have named. The drawing-room school of novelists do not and cannot often go down to a stratum of life deep enough to come upon the springs of faith. Miss Austen never touches them. Thackeray turns dizzy with the very mobility of his own sympathies, and finding a distinct type of faith in every different man's mind, not only proclaims the inscrutability of all divine topics, but refuses to assign any strong motive powers to religious emotions at all in his delineations of human life. Miss Brontë, too, finds it needful to eliminate the supernatural, though she once or twice admits the preternatural, in her pictures. As an artist she is

strictly a secularist, delineating religious enthusiasm only once, and then exhibiting it as the stimulus of a cold nature and as putting forth unlawful claims to overrule legitimate human affections. Even Sir Walter Scott, powerfully as he could paint fanaticism, and keen as was his pleasure in the marvellous, never attempted to paint the quieter and deeper forms of religious faith. He evidently did not admit any supernatural element into his conception of sensible men and women, and never paints its influence over a sober and tranquil will.

Apparently, George Eliot, also,—if I may judge by hints she drops here and there in her various asides to the reader, from the relative place she gives to the supernatural element in her different characters, and from her poems,—agrees with Thackeray that divine things are inscrutable, and that the stronger class of intellects meddle least with the subject, at all events intellectually. But she sees far more clearly than any of them the actual space occupied by spiritual motives in human life,—the depth, beauty, and significance which they, and they alone, give to human action. And, accordingly, in almost all her tales she introduces some character with conscious cravings for something beyond human happiness; while in the most perfect and popular of her works she delineates the most delicately beautiful and spiritual nature with which I have ever met in the whole range of fiction. Goethe's picture of the Fair Saint in "*Wilhelm Meister*" cannot properly be said to belong to fiction at all. Not only is it, in fact, a minute copy from real

life, but it is not even woven by his imagination into the texture of his story. It is an episode of mere description, and the character is not delineated in action. Nay, in itself, the "Schöne Seele" which Goethe has so delicately mirrored for us cannot compare in simplicity and beauty with Dinah in "Adam Bede."

Another element in which George Eliot shows the masculine breadth and strength of her genius adds less to the charm of her tales,—I mean the shrewdness and miscellaneous range of her observations on life. Nothing is rarer than to see in women's writings that kind of strong acute generalisation which Fielding introduced so freely. Yet the miscellaneous observations in which George Eliot so often indulges us, after the fashion of the day, are not always well suited to the particular bent of her genius; indeed, they often break the spell which that genius has laid upon her readers. She is not a satirist, and she half adopts the style of a satirist in these elements of her books. The influence of Thackeray had at first a distinctly bad effect on her genius, but in "Silas Marner" that influence began to wane, and quite disappeared in "Romola," though I think it reappeared a little in "Felix Holt." A powerful and direct style of portraiture is in ill-keeping with that flavour of sarcastic innuendo in which Thackeray delighted. It jars upon the ear in the midst of the simple and faithful delineations of human nature as it really is, with which George Eliot fills her books. It was all very well for Thackeray who made it his main aim and business to expose the hollowness and

insincerities of human society, to add his own keen comment to his own one-sided picture. But then it was of the essence of his genius to lay bare unrealities, and leave the sound life almost untouched. It was rather a relief than otherwise to see him playing with his dissecting-knife after one of his keenest probing feats; you understand better how limited his purpose is,—that he has been in search of organic disease,—and you are not surprised, therefore, to find that he has found little that was healthy.

But George Eliot has a different power. She can delineate what is sound even more powerfully than what is unsound. She does not *expose* but paints human nature, its weakness and its strength; and the satirical tone in which Thackeray justified to his readers the severity of his criticisms, by trying to show that they were all of them open to criticisms at least as severe, is a setting not at all in harmony with George Eliot's style of art. This is, indeed, usually so deep, direct, and real, that the interruption needed to listen to the author's aside is a painful break. It would suit her books far better if in this respect she followed Miss Brontë's eager and undeviating style of narration, and never indulged in the pleasure of being her own critic. But if she must intersperse her narratives with comments and thoughts of her own, she could not have found a less suitable tone for them than that satirical contempt for his readers' unreal state of mind to which the author of "Vanity Fair" accustomed us. When in the midst of an admirable sketch of the farm-labourers on Mr. Poyser's farm, by no

means ill-natured in itself, we come upon such a sentence as this, for instance :—"When Tityrus and Melibœus happen to be on the same farm, they are not sentimentally polite to each other,"—we feel suddenly transported to the latitude of "Vanity Fair." Often it is only that observations themselves not ungenial are clothed in the half-scornful language which Thackeray's success induced so many light writers to adopt. For example, there is in the chapter which opens as follows nothing that is not genial and wise ; but throughout the whole there runs a tone of bantering depreciation,—a "what a vulgar world it is we live in" sort of air, which has no justification either in the tenor of what is said, or the particular incident on which it is a comment :—

"‘This Rector of Broxton is little better than a pagan!’ I hear one of my lady readers exclaim. ‘How much more edifying it would have been if you had made him give Arthur some truly spiritual advice! You might have put into his mouth the most beautiful things—quite as good as reading a sermon.’ Certainly I could, my fair critic, if I were a clever novelist, not obliged to creep servilely after nature and fact, but able to represent things as they never have been and never will be. Then, of course, my characters would be entirely of my own choosing, and I could select the most unexceptionable type of clergyman, and put my own admirable opinions into his mouth on all occasions.”

This is, when read in its context, sarcasm quite out of its natural element, floundering like a fish out of water. Indeed, this foreign mannerism gives a certain air of laborious *smartness* to the chapters of comment in "Adam Bede," which seems to me the only



defect in that wonderful book. That which was only an external mannerism in the occasional commentary of "Adam Bede," grew into a rankling foreign substance in the "Mill on the Floss," and it was a great relief to her admirers to find that in her later works, especially "Silas Marner" and "Romola," George Eliot had in a great degree discontinued it.

For certainly she is no satirist. Even where her banter is best, hers is not the bent to bring out without effort, and yet in full relief, the weak points of men, as the genius of satire requires; and one cannot but feel painfully, that, like most able people who do what it is not their bent to do, she overdoes it, and breaks a butterfly on the wheel. How lightly and tauntingly Thackeray would have given us the following! how broadly ludicrous Dickens might have made it! but in George Eliot's hands it is neither broad fun nor indirect satire, but laborious intellectual power commenting, with painfully painstaking analysis, on human foibles:—

"It is a pathetic sight and a striking example of the complexity introduced into the emotions by a high state of civilisation—the sight of a fashionably-drest female in grief. From the sorrow of a Hottentot to that of a woman in large buckram sleeves, with several bracelets on each arm, an architectural bonnet, and delicate ribbon-strings—what a long series of gradations! In the enlightened child of civilisation the abandonment characteristic of grief is checked and varied in the subtlest manner, so as to present an interesting problem to the analytic mind. If, with a crushed heart and eyes half-blinded by the mist of tears, she were to walk with a too devious step through a door-place, she might crush her buckram sleeves too, and the deep conscious-

ness of this possibility produces a composition of forces by which she takes a line that just clears the doorpost. Perceiving that the tears are hurrying fast, she unpins her strings and throws them languidly backward—a touching gesture, indicative, even in the deepest gloom, of the hope in future dry moments when capstrings will once more have a charm. As the tears subside a little, and with her head leaning backward at the angle that will not injure a bonnet, she endures that terrible moment when grief, which has made all things else a weariness, has itself become weary; she looks down pensively at her bracelets, and adjusts their clasps with that pretty studied fortuity which would be gratifying to her mind if it were once more in a calm and healthy state.”

George Eliot’s humour, which is very great, is not of the ironical or satirical kind. The covert meaning which aims at one thing while it appears to say another is not in her way. The humour in which she excels most has nothing in it of the self-command and reticence which give the edge to irony. The satirist just moves away sufficiently from the station at which for the moment his character is placed to show you how one-sided and shallow that character is; but he keeps on the mask of sympathy, though he allows you to see him smiling under it; and half the sting of his irony consists in his assuming that the weakness probed is too deeply rooted in human nature to mock at openly, though you need not shut your eyes to it.

There is nothing of this species of humour in George Eliot. She has a large share of that dramatic humour of which Shakespeare’s is the model, which consists in a rapid and complete change of moral and intellectual latitude, in showing us the strangely different views of

human things,—vulgar, contemplative, and practical,—which differently situated beings take. Of this kind of humour there is no more perfect and delightful specimen than the scene in which she paints the unflinching (or as we might falsely say, indelicate) feeling of the uneducated towards Death and the necessary accompaniments of Death, as illustrated by Lisbeth Bede's wishes about her husband's coffin and funeral.

“‘What art goin’ to do?’ asked Lisbeth. ‘Set about thy feyther’s coffin?’

‘No, mother,’ said Adam; ‘we’re going to take the wood to the village, and have it made there.’

‘Nay, my lad, nay,’ Lisbeth burst out in an eager, wailing tone; ‘thee wotna let nobody make thy feyther’s coffin but thysen? Who’d make it so well? An’ him as know’d what good work war, an’ ’s got a son as is th’ head o’ the village, an’ all Tred-dles’on too, for cleverness.’

‘Very well, mother, if that’s thy wish, I’ll make the coffin at home; but I thought thee wouldstna like to hear the work going on.’

‘An’ why shouldna I like ’t? It’s the right thing to be done. An’ what’s likin got to do wi’ ’t? It’s choice o’ mislikins is all I’n got i’ this world. One mossel’s as good as another when your mouth’s out o’ taste. Thee mun set about it now this mornin’ fust thing. I wunna ha’ nobody to touch the coffin but thee.’

Adam’s eyes met Seth’s, which looked from Dinah to him rather wistfully.

‘No, mother,’ he said, ‘I’ll not consent; but Seth shall have a hand in it too, if it’s to be done at home. I’ll go to the village this forenoon, because Mr. Burge ’ull want to see me, and Seth shall stay at home and begin the coffin. I can come back at noon, and then he can go.’

‘Nay, nay,’ persisted Lisbeth, beginning to cry, ‘I ’n set my heart on ’t as thee shalt ma’ thy feyther’s coffin. Thee ’t so stiff

an' masterful, thee 't ne'er do as thy mother wants thee. Thee wast often angered wi' thy feyther when he war alive; thee must be the better to 'm now he's goen'. *He'd ha' thought nothin' on 't for Seth to ma's coffin.'*"

Some of George Eliot's most subtle and characteristic humour consists in giving to the conversation of her rural louts a distinct, though of course unconscious, bearing on the intellectual questions contemporaneously discussed by the most highly cultivated, without coming to any much more impressive results. Even when this is not the case, there is a humour in the mere sharpness of the contrast between the favourite subjects of her boors and those of refined society. Thus, in the inimitable conversation at the opening of "*Silas Marner*,"—the conversation in the Rainbow Inn—the subject is simply and solely one to excite the professional interest of butchers and of all connoisseurs in grazing stock. But the pungency is given by the grotesqueness of the contrast between the professional interests of the lower and middle classes, and by that additional flavour of professionalism which every descent in the scale of education certainly insures.

The conversation, which was at a high pitch of animation when Silas approached the door of the Rainbow, had, as usual, been slow and intermittent when the company first assembled. The pipes began to be puffed in a silence which had an air of severity; the more important customers, who drank spirits and sat nearest the fire, staring at each other as if a bet were depending on the first man who winked; while the beer-drinkers, chiefly men in fustian jackets and smock-frocks, kept their eyelids down and rubbed their hands across their mouths, as if their draughts of beer had been a funereal duty attended with embarrassing

sadness. At last, Mr. Snell, the landlord, a man of neutral disposition, accustomed to stand aloof from human differences as those of beings who were all alike in need of liquor, broke silence, by saying in a doubtful tone to his cousin the butcher,—

“Some folks ’ud say that was a fine beast you druv in yesterday, Bob?”

The butcher, a jolly, smiling, red-haired man, was not disposed to answer rashly. He gave a few puffs before he spat and replied, “And they wouldn’t be fur wrong, John.”

After this feeble delusive thaw, the silence set in as severely as before.

“Was it a red Durham?” said the farrier, taking up the thread of discourse after the lapse of a few minutes.

The farrier looked at the landlord, and the landlord looked at the butcher, as the person who must take the responsibility of answering.

“Red it was,” said the butcher, in his good-humoured husky treble—“and a Durham it was.”

“Then you needn’t tell *me* who you bought it of,” said the farrier, looking round with some triumph; “I know who it is has got the red Durhams o’ this country-side. And she’d a white star on her brow, I’ll bet a penny?” The farrier leaned forward with his hands on his knees as he put this question, and his eyes twinkled knowingly.

“Well, yes—she might,” said the butcher, slowly, considering that he was giving a decided affirmative. “I don’t say contrary.”

“I knew that very well,” said the farrier, throwing himself backward again and speaking defiantly; “if *I* don’t know Mr. Lammeter’s cows, I should like to know who does—that’s all. And as for the cow you’ve bought, bargain or no bargain, I’ve been at the drenching of her—contradick me who will.”

The farrier looked fierce, and the mild butcher’s conversational spirit was roused a little.

“I’m not for contradicking no man,” he said; “I’m for peace and quietness. Some are for cutting long ribs—I’m for cutting ’em short, myself; but *I* don’t quarrel with ’em. All I say is,

it's a lovely carkiss—and anybody as was reasonable, it 'ud bring tears into their eyes to look at it."

"Well, it's the cow as I drenched, whatever it is," pursued the farrier, angrily; "and it was Mr. Lammeter's cow, else you told a lie when you said it was a red Durham."

"I tell no lies," said the butcher, with the same mild huskiness as before; "and I contradick none—not if a man was to swear himself black: he's no meat o' mine, nor none of my bargains. All I say is, it's a lovely carkiss. And what I say I'll stick to; but I'll quarrel wi' no man."

"No," said the farrier, with bitter sarcasm, looking at the company generally; "and p'rhaps you aren't pig-headed; and p'rhaps you didn't say the cow was a red Durham; and p'rhaps you didn't say she'd got a star on her brow—stick to that, now you're at it."

"Come, come," said the landlord; "let the cow alone. The truth lies atween you: you're both right and both wrong, as I allays say. And as for the cow's being Mr. Lammeter's, I say nothing to that; but this I say, as the Rainbow's the Rainbow."

But as soon as Mr. Macey, the parish clerk and tailor, enters into the conversation, a faint shadow of the intellectual phases of "modern thought,"—just sufficient to remind the reader of the form which they take in the present day, without in any way marring the truth of the picture,—begins to fall on it. Mr. Macey has fallen upon some appropriate form of the difficulty of distinguishing between the "subjective" and the "objective." He it is who tells us that "there's allays two 'pinions; there's the 'pinion a man has of himsen, and there's the 'pinion other folks have on him. There'd be two 'pinions about a cracked bell if the bell could hear itself." And further, in discussing the error of a bride and bride-

groom who had interchanged their respective responses in the marriage service, he throws up the difficult question as to the relation between "substance" and "form." "Is it the meaning or the words as makes folks fast in wedlock? For the parson meant right, and the bride and bridegroom meant right. But then, when I come to think on it, meanin' goes but a little way i' most things, for you may mean to stick things together, and your glue may be bad, and then where are you? And so I says to mysen, 'It isn't the meanin', it's the glue.' And I was worreted as if I'd got three bells to pull at once. . . . But where's the use o' talking?—you can't think what goes on in a 'cute man's inside."

There is also in George Eliot abundance of what always accompanies dramatic humour,—I mean a great fertility in illustrative analogies which go to the very heart of a one-sided view of any question. Of this Mrs. Poyser's justly-admired wit is the most obvious example. When, for instance, she wishes to impress upon Dinah that her village convert's piety is an artificial result of her own personal influence, and cannot outlast her absence a day, what can be more felicitous than her simile? "There's that Bessy Cranage, she'll be flaunting in new finery three weeks after you're gone, I'll be bound: she'll no more go on in her new ways without you than a dog 'ull stand on it's hind legs when nobody's looking."

But while George Eliot's imagination is opulent enough in its power of dramatic humour, in its capacity for easily migrating from one moral latitude to

another, and fertile enough in illustration of any view, or any character it once grasps, one sees in the third volume of the "Mill on the Floss," and partly, I think, in the somewhat laborious gossip of the Florentine society in "Romola," that there is no proportionate power of indirectly portraying character by the side-lights and shadows of easy general conversation,—a power which generally distinguishes feminine novelists. In the picture of life as it passed in St. Ogg's drawing-rooms, she falls so much below herself that this, it is quite clear, is not her natural field of art. With all her subtlety and intellectual power, which are obviously great, and her humour, which is greater, she falls far short of many who are greatly her inferiors in genius, in her attempt to delineate character through this tranquil play of educated social intercourse. Take up almost any scene in Thackeray or Mr. Trollope, and you will find a conversation in which, without any formal discussion, every character seems to be answering by some slight modification in its own tone to the chords struck by the others. This sort of play of character is mainly a fruit of social elasticity. The type of mind in the uncultivated classes, whom George Eliot has made her chief study, is much stiffer and more monotonous. The latter change with the changes in their own mood, but do not suffer the same subtle modifications of tone and feeling from social influences, which you perceive in educated life. George Eliot has but little skill in delineating this social phenomenon. Her imagination requires to have a distinct conception of the mood or



thought to be seized before she can paint it. There is nothing of that easy modulation (grasped by instinct rather than by imagination) in the conversation of her educated people, which constitutes half its charm, and which gives to the modern novelist so wide a field for indirect portraiture. Among Miss Austen's scenes, for instance, George Eliot might perhaps have written those between people of a totally different social level, as, for example, the humorous scenes between the Miss Steeles and the Miss Dashwoods in "*Sense and Sensibility*." But the third volume of the "*Mill on the Floss*" seems to show that the delicately-delineated play of feeling between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in "*Pride and Prejudice*," or between Emma and Jane Fairfax in "*Emma*," would have been quite out of her sphere. It is much more difficult for an Englishman to criticise her very elaborate picture of the gossip of Florentine market-places, but to me there seems a constant over-laboriousness even there.

Indeed, there are probably no two more different types of genius than that which excels in indirect and that which excels in direct delineation. And George Eliot, like Sir Walter Scott, is always most successful with the broadest and simplest modes in which human character expresses itself. In short, for masculine composure and range of sympathy, for strength of grasp in dealing with universal human feelings, for skill in habitually realising to us that individual differences of character are engrafted on a fundamental community of nature,—she has no rival among the literary artists of the present day. And

though it is in part a logical consequence of these great gifts, yet, as I have shown, it is exceptional enough to deserve separate notice, and adds indefinitely to the charm they exercise, that she has a keen sense of that infinite hunger of the spirit which nothing human can appease, and a true eye for the inward conditions, by the rare fulfilment of which that hunger is satisfied.

While "Romola" will very probably prove to be the favourite work of this great artist with the few who appreciate it thoroughly, and "Silas Marner" is the richest triumph of her humour, "Adam Bede" is always likely to remain George Eliot's most popular work. It is a story of which any English author, however great his name, could not fail to have been proud. Everything about it (if I except perhaps a touch of melodrama connected with the execution scene) is at once simple and great, and the plot is unfolded with singular simplicity, purity, and power. George Eliot is evidently a writer who needs a plot of great natural interest, and with a natural unity of its own, to unfold fully the resources of her genius. She has none of the concentrative and subjective intensity of Miss Brontë; her lights flow equally over her pictures; and it is their tendency to *overflow*. Her first publication, "Scenes from Clerical Life," of which the first and last are quite loose sketches without any natural unity, show the characteristic freedom of her manner. She finds it difficult to concentrate her own interest, and therefore to concentrate her readers' interest, on any one particular current of life. Her

genius delights in depicting the life of a little community; and even when she has got a really deep interest at work on her village stage, she is always anxious to remind herself and her readers how the general population are doing meanwhile in spite of it, —to picture them as they are, quite unconscious of the unfolding plot and living out their ordinary lives in the ordinary way, with but few half-curious glances at the slowly-maturing crisis.

This tendency gives a great charm to a tale in which the interest is really profound; for it turns the story from a mere narrative of individual perils, trials, joys, and sorrows, into a vivid illustration of the common human lot. There is a concentrated sort of egotism about common novels even of a high order of talent, which is one reason why the interest in them is apt to die away in riper years. Sir Walter Scott's novels are never iron-bound by this purely individual kind of interest: to children they seem far too discursive, too little limited to the particular story; but his tales retain among the mature the popularity which they have in youth in great measure on this very account, that they range so pleasantly beyond the borders of the immediate narrative, and give us so wide a knowledge of the great common life in the heart of which the individual actors of the story are placed. But then, Sir Walter Scott had also an intense sympathy with action, an eager interest in the unwinding of his own tales, which generally at least prevented his discursiveness from passing the boundaries of legitimate art. He never failed to give us a general background,

a vista of tradition concerning the times of which he writes ; but he seldom failed to make it a background to some much more vivid interest which fills the foreground in his own mind.

Perhaps George Eliot is to some extent deficient in this sympathy with action. She has obviously a great dislike to all those artificial enhancements of interest which do not arise fairly out of the moral constitutions of the characters ; and this may have induced her sometimes to overlook the artistic value of a rapid current of action, of a certain shadow of suspense, as instruments in the exhibition of the deeper springs of human character. But if this indifference to the machinery of romance be a defect, it disappears in "Adam Bede," and is closely connected with its greatest beauties. In almost any other writer's hands the story of seduction which is at the basis of "Adam Bede" would have been heightened by innumerable factitious elements, and the various threads of interest multiplied and interwoven at every point. George Eliot's natural aversion to these adventitious effects induced her to limit herself strictly to the simplest possible unfolding of the tragedy ; and the consequence is, that the story gains in moral spaciousness far more than it could have lost in exciting elements.

Nor is this clearness of the moral space, this free movement of personal character, a common characteristic of modern novels. There are two common errors into which even the greatest authors manage to fall, and by which they produce a suffocating effect in their pictures, and give the impression that their characters

are, as Thackeray calls them, "puppets," with the strings pulled from behind. One error, the commonest in the greater modern artists, is to smother character in society,—to limit the whole scope of the delineation to the little effects which can be produced on a crowded canvas, where there is no room for even one mind to be itself, or to be seen apart from the rippling of social influences upon it. The other error, the commonest in writers of the older school, is to smother character in incident, to accumulate motives and external excitements so thickly, as to drown all spontaneous life in the artificial tension of passive emotion and involuntary impulse. One amongst several reasons why Scott's heroes and heroines are usually the poorest characters in his tales is, that they are made the centres of all these circumstantial interests,—the puppets arbitrarily moved about by these hidden strings. In neither case is there proper space for the free play of personal life. Real men of any force have a free sphere of their own, influenced, but in no way determined, by the social or circumstantial influences which hem them round ; and to encumber the principal characters with too great a pressure of subsidiary influences whether of one kind or another is almost inevitably to cramp the design and destroy the freedom of the life portrayed. Now there is nothing of all this in "Adam Bede." There is no such concentration of distracting influences as to bewilder any of the characters out of their natural responsibility for themselves and their own actions. No doubt a rural society, a certain community of life, is depicted ; but while this is kept

constantly present to one's mind by the fidelity with which all the mutual relations of the village society are impressed on the language and bearing of the characters delineated, yet each character stands out distinct and clear, holding its own destiny in its own power. This gives dignity, freedom, and simplicity to the whole, and adds a kind of solemnity to the movement of the principal action in the story, which, had it been complicated by any extraneous or chance elements, must have produced a less profound and single effect on the imagination.

Even in "Adam Bede" there is an occasional looseness in the texture of the narrative which indicates the characteristic tendency of the author to sketch-in freely all her imagination has grasped, without reference to unity of design; but the intrinsic interest of the plot so far checks this tendency as to render it visible only when previously suggested by her other works. One sees it mainly in this, that some of the principal figures, quite essential to the whole effect of the tale, stand too much outside the thread of the story, and take no part in its evolution. In Goethe's novels this fault reaches its climax; for no one has any reason to suppose, merely because a figure appears there, and is very carefully painted in, that it is to be connected in any way with the unwinding of the tale. George Eliot is not chargeable with any fault so great as this; but, apart from any disposition to uphold mere technical or formal rules of art, there is a greater vividness of impression, a more concentrated effect produced on the mind, when the course of the narrative works *in con-*

*junction* with the power of the artist to engrave the picture upon the memory, than when they work apart. Seth Bede, for instance, one of the best conceptions in the story, is almost entirely a spectator of its course; one might remember the whole essence of the plot, and almost forget his existence,—and yet he is not a mere side-sketch, like Bartle Massey or Mr. Craig, for his character is essential to bring out in full relief the characters of Adam and of Dinah. Even in this tale, then, the group of characters painted is a far more perfect work of art than the story, taken as a whole, which includes them; for only one or two are strongly impressed on the mind by virtue of their close connection with the action of the narrative; the images of the remainder, graphically as they are rendered, are conveyed to the reader mainly through dialogue and description.

But, this once admitted, there is no further qualification to make in one's admiration of the art of the story. The group of characters, conceived in themselves, and without reference to the narrative, seems to me perfect,—a rural cartoon of marvellous simplicity, and yet stately in its beauty. The strong-headed, manly, sharp-tempered, secular carpenter, with his energetic satisfaction in work, his impatience of dreamers, and his early passion for Hetty's earthly loveliness,—the tender-hearted, mystic-minded Seth, who so readily unlooses his hold of his one dream of happiness,—the pretty, vain, little, pleasure-loving dairymaid, with her inarticulate love of luxury and dread of shame, so shallow that she cannot even feel a

passing anticipation of the fate before her, but flutters into it like a moth into the candle,—the spiritual, transparent-minded, meditative, yet clear-sighted Wesleyan factory-girl, whose delicate sensitiveness to the inward condition and wants of others never ruffles her own distinct apprehension of the personal duty before her,—the good-natured, self-deceiving, weak young squire, with his patronising generosity, and his disposition to comfort himself, in his self-reproach, with the good opinion of those who are totally ignorant of his grounds for self-reproach,—and the noble, easy-minded, tolerant rector who feels so little impulse to exert moral influence over others that the Wesleyan factory-girl is a problem to him, and who, even where he has natural authority, rather shrinks from the intrusion necessary to exert it,—with the many other vividly-painted figures more or less in the background,—the quick-witted, fretful Lisbeth, with her excessive fondness for the son she fears, and her half-contempt for the son whose religiousness she regards as an insurance to the family,—the more quick-witted and more audacious farmer's wife, whose reverence for the piety of her niece is so strongly mixed with dislike of eccentricity and dissent ;—these, with the slighter but equally true outlines with which the picture is filled up, form one of the truest and most typical groups of English life I have ever seen delineated.

Moreover, the characters themselves are not more perfectly handled than the scene. It is impossible to forget where we are for a moment. The hum of village-life is heard throughout ; the paramount influence of



the manor-house, the substantial importance of the well-to-do farmer, the rector's authority in the parish,—are all conveyed without any effort through the force with which the author realizes her scenes; and frequently we have a picture of idyllic beauty—as where Adam Bede finds Hetty picking currants in the garden—that reminds us of the soft poetic touch with which Goethe delineated a situation that had sunk deep into his mind.

The greatest effort and greatest success of the book consist, however, in the wonderful power of the contrast between Hetty and Dinah. From the first introduction of Dinah preaching to the crowd on the village green, and winning her little success over the vain heart of the blacksmith's daughter, and the first appearance of Hetty tossing her butter in the dairy, full of conscious delight at *her* little success in riveting Captain Donnithorne's admiration, the interest centres in these two figures. What common measure of human nature can apply to them both? Near as they are in position, and equal in attractions, and belonging alike to the same half-educated class, they represent evidently the highest and lowest grade in the scale of spiritual nature, and the thoughts that fill the mind of the one do not even rouse the faintest echo in the nature of the other. The art of the contrast is the greater that it is never forced on our attention, and never exaggerated. Yet from the first it is growing upon us. Dinah's gentle rejection of the one brother whom she cannot love, opens the tale, while Hetty's conduct to the other whom she cannot love, forms its climax of interest.

The interest is the deeper and truer that it is not the commonplace antithesis between right and wrong, but between the finest and most delicate of spiritual consciences, and that absolute inaccessibility to moral or spiritual thought which marks a soft, shallow, pleasure-loving nature preoccupied with self-love. The moral *material* of which the two girls are made seems chargeable with the difference rather than any conduct of their own. Can any meeting-point be found between the two? or, if not, any experience, however strange, which shall bridge the apparently impassable gulf? This is in great measure the theme of the story; and the scene in which it is first fully realised,—where Dinah and Hetty are pictured in the adjoining bedrooms, each in their separate world,—is one of the most powerful pieces of imaginative writing which the present generation has produced. I can but extract the closing passage:—

“What a strange contrast the two figures made! Visible enough in that mingled twilight and moonlight. Hetty, her cheeks flushed and her eyes glistening from her imaginary drama, her beautiful neck and arms bare, her hair hanging in a curly tangle down her back, and the baubles in her ears. Dinah, covered with her long white dress, her pale face full of subdued emotion, almost like a lovely corpse into which the soul has returned charged with sublimer secrets and a sublimer love. They were nearly of the same height; Dinah evidently a little the taller as she put her arm round Hetty’s waist, and kissed her forehead.

“‘I knew you were not in bed, my dear,’ she said, in her sweet clear voice, which was irritating to Hetty, mingling with her own peevish vexation like music with jangling chains, ‘for I

heard you moving; and I longed to speak to you again to-night, for it is the last but one that I shall be here, and we don't know what may happen to-morrow to keep us apart. Shall I sit down with you while you do up your hair?' 'O yes,' said Hetty, hastily turning round and reaching the second chair in the room, glad that Dinah looked as if she did not notice her earrings.

"Dinah sat down, and Hetty began to brush together her hair before twisting it up, doing it with that air of excessive indifference which belongs to confused self-consciousness. But the expression of Dinah's eyes gradually relieved her; they seemed unobservant of all details. 'Dear Hetty,' she said, 'it has been borne in upon my mind to-night that you may some day be in trouble—trouble is appointed for us all here below, and there comes a time when we need more comfort and help than the things of this life can give. I want to tell you that if ever you are in trouble and need a friend that will always feel for you and love you, you have got that friend in Dinah Morris at Snowfield; and if you come to her, or send for her, she'll never forget this night, and the words she is speaking to you now. Will you remember it, Hetty?' 'Yes,' said Hetty, rather frightened. 'But why should you think I shall be in trouble? Do you know of anything?' Hetty had seated herself as she tied on her cap, and now Dinah leaned forwards and took her hands as she answered,

"'Because, dear, trouble comes to us all in this life: we set our hearts on things which it isn't God's will for us to have, and then we go sorrowing; the people we love are taken from us, and we can joy in nothing because they are not with us; sickness comes, and we faint under the burden of our feeble bodies; we go astray and do wrong, and bring ourselves into trouble with our fellow-men. There is no man or woman born into this world to whom some of these trials do not fall, and so I feel that some of them must happen to you; and I desire for you, that while you are young you should seek for strength from your Heavenly Father, that you may have a support which will not fail you in the evil day.'

"Dinah paused and released Hetty's hands, that she might not hinder her. Hetty sat quite still: she felt no response within herself to Dinah's anxious affection; but Dinah's words, uttered with solemn, pathetic distinctness, affected her with a chill fear. Her flush had died away almost to paleness; she had the timidity of a luxurious pleasure-seeking nature, which shrinks from the hint of pain. Dinah saw the effect, and her tender anxious pleading became the more earnest, till Hetty, full of a vague fear that something evil was sometime to befall her, began to cry. . . . Dinah had never seen Hetty affected in this way before, and with her usual benignant helpfulness, she trusted it was the stirring of a divine impulse. She kissed the sobbing thing, and began to cry with her for grateful joy. But Hetty was simply in that excitable state of mind in which there is no calculating what turn the feelings may take from one moment to another, and for the first time she became irritated under Dinah's caress. She pushed her away impatiently, and said with a childish sobbing voice, 'Don't talk to me so, Dinah. Why do you come to frighten me? I've never done anything to you. Why can't you let me be?'

"Poor Dinah felt a pang. She was too wise to persist, and only said mildly, 'Yes, my dear, you're tired; I won't hinder you any longer. Make haste and get into bed. Good-night.' She went out of the room almost as quietly and quickly as if she had been a ghost; but once by the side of her own bed, she threw herself on her knees, and poured out in deep silence all the passionate pity that filled her heart. As for Hetty, she was soon in the wood again—her waking dreams being merged in a sleeping life scarcely more fragmentary and confused."

This is powerful, and it seems scarcely possible that the conception of a problem so deep should be worked out with any adequate success; and yet the development is as powerful as the commencement, and the solution most powerful of all. To depict the sufferings of a sensitive but frail nature,—the remorse of

guilt, the despair of shame,—this would be comparatively easy to an imagination so powerful as George Eliot's. But to deal with a nature too shallow for any real sense of guilt, too easily numbed by pain for clear thought at all, too cowardly for despair,—and to show how, by the slow, dull pressure of mingled shame and hardship, momentarily broken by a new instinct, and then renewed after a more conscious act of guilt, a dim sense of spiritual things is literally *wrung* out of this sterile little pleasure-loving life, till under Dinah's kindly influence it becomes a distinct cry for help,—this is a task as great as any which an imaginative writer below the rank of a great poet ever attempted. Observe with what flexibility the author contracts her own powerful imagination within the limits of Hetty's nature, and delineates the growing wretchedness and numbness of her vacant mind during the futile journey in search of Captain Donnithorne, the helpless attempt to destroy herself, and the violent shrinking of her whole being from the brink of death.

“The horror of this cold, and darkness, and solitude—out of all human reach—became greater every long minute: it was almost as if she were dead already, and knew that she was dead and longed to get back to life again. But no: she was alive still; she had not taken the dreadful leap. She felt a strange contradictory wretchedness and exultation; wretchedness, that she did not dare to face death; exultation, that she was still in life—that she might yet know light and warmth again. She walked backwards and forwards to warm herself, beginning to discern something of the objects around her, as her eyes became accustomed to the night: the darker line of the hedge, the rapid motion of some living creature—perhaps a field-mouse—rushing

across the grass. She no longer felt as if the darkness hedged her in: she thought she could walk back across the field, and get over the stile; and then, in the very next field, she thought she remembered there was a hovel of furze near a sheepfold. . . .

“She had found the shelter: she groped her way, touching the prickly gorse, to the door, and pushed it open. It was an ill-smelling close place, but warm, and there was straw on the ground: Hetty sank down on the straw with a sense of escape. Tears came—she had never shed tears before since she left Windsor—tears and sobs of hysterical joy that she had still hold of life, that she was still on the familiar earth, with the sheep near her. The very consciousness of her own limbs was a delight to her: she turned up her sleeves, and kissed her arms with the passionate love of life.”

Seldom has any human experience been more powerfully painted, and yet the confession in prison which Dinah at last wins from her is still more powerful. In short, the whole thread of inward history which unites the first interview between them in Hetty's bedroom with the last in her cell, is recounted with a power quite unsurpassed in fiction. With no more promising instrument to work upon than the most sterile and frivolous of characters, George Eliot has brought forth tones which are far more pathetic than could have been extorted from a nobler type of suffering and penitence, for they seem to attest more solemnly the capacities of all men—of man. The spiritual and the earthly natures find at last a single meeting-point in the infantine cry for divine mercy which poor little Hetty puts forth to Dinah rather than to God.

The artistic conditions under which George Eliot works are, when she chooses, singularly favourable to

the exhibition of the only kind of "moral" which a genuine artist should admit. No one now ever thinks of assuming that a writer of fiction lies under any obligation to dispose of his characters exactly as he would perhaps feel inclined to do, if he could determine for them the circumstances of a real instead of an imaginary life. It was a quaint idea of the last generation to suppose that the moral tendency of a tale lay, not in discriminating evil and good, but in the zeal which induced the novelist to provide, before the end of the third volume, for plucking up and burning the tares. But though we have got over that notion, our modern satirists are leading us into the opposite extreme, and trying to convince us that even discrimination itself, in such deep matters, is nearly impossible. The author of the "Mill on the Floss" is hardly exempt from this tendency; but in "Adam Bede" it is not discernible.

The only moral in a fictitious story which can properly be demanded of writers of genius is,—*not* to shape their tale this way or that, which they may justly decline to do on artistic grounds,—but to discriminate clearly the relative nobility of the characters they do conceive; in other words, to give us light enough in their pictures to let it be clearly seen where the shadows are intended to lie. An artist who leaves it doubtful whether he recognises the distinction between good and evil at all, or who detects in all his characters so much evil that the readers' sympathies must either be entirely passive or side with what is evil, is blind to artistic as well as moral laws. To

banish confusion from a picture is the first duty of the artist; and confusion must exist where those lines which are the most essential of all for determining the configuration of human character are invisible or indistinctly drawn. Moreover, I think it may be said, that in painting human nature an artist is bound to give due weight to the motives which would claim authority over him in other acts of his life; and as he would be bound at any time and in any place to do anything in his power to make clear the relation between good and evil, the same motive ought to induce him never to omit in his drawing to put in a light or a shadow which would add to the moral truthfulness of the picture.

But this conceded, an artist must still work according to the conditions of his own genius, and where that genius leads him only to give lively sketches, such as Miss Austen's for example, of the social externals of character, and barely to indicate the interior forces which determine its form and growth, it is unreasonable to expect more than a very superficial moral. Those stories alone can have deep morals which are concerned with the deepest moral phenomena; but where this is so they must show them in their true light. "Adam Bede" may be said to produce in this sense a deeper and nobler moral impression than any other English story of our day. It exhibits in close mutual relations characters of very various degrees of moral depth. It teaches us to discriminate truly between them. It has for its centre-piece one singularly beautiful and bright character



which illuminates the whole narrative, and so aids us to realise the good and the evil in all the others; and hence every conscience as well as every imagination gains fresh force and distincter vision from its perusal.

The "Mill on the Floss" is in every way inferior, in some respects painfully inferior, to "Adam Bede." It is a masterly fragment of fictitious biography in two volumes, followed by a second-rate one-volume novel,—the three connected into a single whole by very inadequate links. The deeper characters in the tale are not nearly so deep as those in "Adam Bede;" and the shallower characters do not serve in the same way to bring into relief the nobler characteristics of the deeper. The moral foundations of the story are almost entirely laid on the same dreary level. Moral and spiritual *perspective* there is almost none. The one character which is intended to give depth to and light up the tale at one time threatens to go out in smoke; and the shadows are anything but clear. There is occasional confusion, both artistic and moral, some exaggeration, and, I think, in the mere physiological attraction felt by the heroine for Stephen Guest, and all but yielded to, there is a serious artistic and moral blot.

Yet "The Mill on the Floss" is a book of great genius. Its overflowing humour would alone class its author high among the humorists, and there are some sketches in it of English country life which have all the vivacity and not a little of the power of Sir Walter Scott's best works. The proud, warm-

hearted, not very clear-headed miller, whose heart is broken by bankruptcy, and whose spirit is consumed with the thirst for revenge, is a character to live in the imagination. Yet "The Mill on the Floss" is so inferior in art to George Eliot's really greatest works that I may pass it by to speak of what is in some respects her greatest achievement, "Romola."

George Eliot's drawings, as I have before said, all require a certain space, like Raffael's cartoons, and are not of that kind which produce their effect by the reiteration of scenes each complete in itself. You have to unroll a large surface of the picture before even the smallest *unit* of its effect is attained. And this is far more true of "Romola" than of her English tales. In the latter, the constant and striking delineation of social features with which we are all familiar, satisfies the mind in the detail almost as much as in the complete whole. This cannot be so when even greater power is shown in mastering the life of a foreign nation in a past age. We do not care about the light Florentine buzz with which so great a part of the first volume is filled. Its allusions are half riddles, and its liveliness a blank to us. Small local colours depend for their charm on the familiarity of small local knowledge. Then, again, George Eliot is much greater as an imaginative painter of character than as an imaginative painter of action, and naturally much more inclined for the one than the other. What her characters *do* is always subordinate with her to what they *are*. This is the highest artistic power, but it carries its inconveniences with it. She does not

carry her readers *away*, as it is called : it is generally easy to stop reading her ; she satisfies you for the moment, and does not make you look forward to the end. She has Sir Walter Scott's art for revivifying the past,—but not Scott's dynamical force in making you plunge into it with as headlong an interest as into the present. For this she compensates by a deeper and wider intellectual grasp,—but still it is easy enough to understand why half-developed characters, sketched in with unfamiliar local colours on a background of history that has long melted away, should look strange and uninviting, especially when not carried off by any exciting current of events, to the ordinary reader's eye. It is marvellous that, in spite of these disadvantages, the wide and calm imaginative power of the writer should have produced a work which is likely to be permanently celebrated in English literature,—in which Italy and England may feel a common pride.

The great artistic purpose of the story is to trace out the conflict between liberal culture and a most passionate form of Christian faith in that strange era (which has so many points of resemblance with the present), when the two in their most characteristic forms struggled for pre-eminence over Florentines who had been educated into the half-pedantic and half-idealistic scholarship of Lorenzo de Medici,—who faintly shared the new scientific impulses of the age of Columbus and Copernicus,—and whose hearts and consciences were stirred by the preaching, political as well as spiritual, of one of the very greatest as well as earliest of the reformers, the Dominican friar

Savonarola. No period could be found when mingling faith and culture effervesced with more curious results. In some great and noble minds the new Learning, clearing away the petty rubbish of medieval superstition, and revealing the severe simplicities of the great age of Greece, grew into a feeling that supplied all the stimulus of fever, if not the rest of faith, and of these the author has drawn a very fine picture in the blind Florentine scholar, Romola's father, Bardo, who, with a restless fire in his heart, "hung over the books and lived with the shadows" all his life. Nothing is more striking and masterly in the story than the subtle skill with which the dominant influence of this scholarship over the imagination of the elder generation of that time—the generation which saw the first revival of learning—is delineated in the pictures of Bardo and Baldassarre. In the former you get something like a glimpse of the stately passion for learning, which, in a later age (though England was then naturally behind Italy), took so vital a hold of the intellect of Milton, and overlaid his powerful imagination with all its rich fretwork of elaborate classical allusion. In the latter character, Baldassarre, the same impression is conveyed in a still more subtle and striking form, because by painting the intermittent flashes of intellectual power in a scholar's failing memory, and its alternations with an almost animal passion of revenge, we gain not only a more distinct knowledge of the relative value in which scholarship was there and then held as compared with other human attainments, but a novel sense of sympathy, which, in an age of diffused culture like

this, it is not very easy to attain, with the extravagance, as we should now think, of the price set upon it. There are few passages of subtler literary grandeur in English romance than that which paints the electrifying effect of a thrill of vindictive passion on Baldassarre's paralysed memory, in recalling once more his full command of Greek learning, and the sense of power which thus returned to him:—

“He leaned to take up the fragments of the dagger; then he turned towards the book which lay open at his side. It was a fine large manuscript, an old volume of Pausanias. The moonlight was upon it, and he could see the large letters at the head of the page:

ΜΕΣΣΗΝΙΚΑ. Κ Β'.

In old days he had known Pausanias familiarly: yet an hour or two ago he had been looking hopelessly at that page, and it had suggested no more meaning to him than if the letters had been black weather-marks on a wall; but at this moment they were once more the magic signs that conjure up a world. That moonbeam falling on the letters had raised Messenia before him, and its struggle against the Spartan oppression. He snatched up the book, but the light was too pale for him to read further by. No matter; he knew that chapter; he read inwardly. He saw the stoning of the traitor Aristocrates—stoned by a whole people, who cast him out from their borders to lie unburied, and set up a pillar with verses upon it, telling how Time had brought home justice to the unjust. The words arose within him, and stirred innumerable vibrations of memory. He forgot that he was old: he could almost have shouted. The light was come again, mother of knowledge and joy! In that exultation his limbs recovered their strength: he started up with his broken dagger and book, and went out under the broad moonlight. It was a nipping frosty air, but Baldassarre could feel no chill—he only felt the glow of conscious power. He walked about and paused on all

the open spots of that high ground, and looked down on the domed and towered city, sleeping darkly under its sleeping guardians, the mountains; on the pale gleam of the river; on the valley vanishing towards the peaks of snow: and felt himself master of them all. That sense of mental empire which belongs to us all in moments of exceptional clearness, was intensified for him by the long days and nights in which memory had been little more than the consciousness of something gone. That city, which had been a weary labyrinth, was material that he could subdue to his purposes now: his mind glanced through its affairs with flashing conjecture; he was once more a man who knew cities, whose sense of vision was instructed with large experience, and who felt the keen delight of holding all things in the grasp of language. Names! Images!—his mind rushed through its wealth without pausing, like one who enters on a great inheritance."

This passage, taken with those which lead up to it, whether they refer to Bardo or Baldassarre, has the effect of reproducing one great feature in the age of the revival of learning with the finest effect—that sense of large *human* power which the mastery over a great ancient language, itself the key to a magnificent literature, gave, and which made scholarship then a *passion*, while with us it has almost relapsed into an antiquarian dry-as-dust pursuit.

We realise again, in reading about Bardo and Baldassarre, how, for these times, the first sentence of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word," had regained all its force,—to the exclusion, perhaps, of the further assertion that the Word was with God and was God. Man's sense of the great *power* of language, of which we have now so little, which, indeed, it is the tendency of the present day to depreciate, was in

that day full of a new vigour ; and to some extent contested with the mysteries of the Gospel the control of great men's souls.

This is the picture which *Romola* makes so living for us. We find here the strife between the keen definite knowledge of the reviving Greek learning, and the turbid visionary mysticism of the reviving Dominican piety. We find a younger generation, represented by Romola, and Dino, and Tito, that has inherited this scholarship, and finds it wholly inadequate for its wants, looking upon that almost as dry bones, which the older generation felt to be stimulating nourishment, --and either turning from it, like Dino, to the rapture of mystical asceticism, or using it, like Tito, as a useful sharp-edged tool in the battle of Florentine politics, or trying, like Romola, to turn it to its true purpose, viz., that of clarifying and sifting the false from the true elements in the great mysterious faith presented to her conscience by Savonarola. The pride of laborious farseeing scholarship, gazing with clear scornful eyes at the inarticulate convulsive ecstasies of faith,—all the powers of language rebelling passionately, as it were, against the deep and fervent passions which transcend the containing powers of language, and boil over its edges, in religious, or even in the opposite animal raptures,—this is a picture wonderfully painted, and which produces all the more impression, that the minute vivid ripple of the light gossip of the Florentine market-place gives a ground-tone to the book.

This fundamental conflict between the Greek scholarship and the mystical Christian faith which runs through

the book, is made even more striking by the treacherous character of the man who represents the Greek culture cut adrift from all vestige of moral or religious faith. The fine gradations of social dissimulation so characteristic of Florence in the Medicean era, ranging from the single politic insincerity of Savonarola, which raises so grand a struggle in his mind, down to the easy-sliding treachery of Tito, bring up before us in another shape the characteristic contrasts of that day between that earnest spirit which revived the old culture because it was *truer* than the degraded current superstitions,—that pliant worldliness which adopted, and adapted itself to it, because it was an instrument of finer edge and wider utility,—and lastly, that fervent faith which despised it as substituting the study of a dead past for the great conflict of a living present. Tito's smooth dissimulation is all the more striking a picture, because it comes out as the natural fruit of a mind almost incapable of either strong conviction or strong personal fidelity, gliding about in an age when strong convictions were coming to the birth, and among a race barely redeemed from a spirit of political falsehood (which was just going to be called Machiavellian) by a proud sense of loyalty to personal and party ties.

Tito is pictured, as the Greeks of that time perhaps deserved to be pictured, not as originally false, but as naturally pleasure-loving, and swerving aside before every unpleasant obstacle in the straight path, at the instance of a quick intelligence and a keen dislike both to personal collisions and to personal sacrifices.



His character is, to use a mathematical term, the osculating curve which touches that of each of the others at the surface, and nowhere else—Savonarola's at the point of his external political policy, Romola's in her love of beauty and hatred of the turbid malarious exhalations of visionary excitement, and the scholarly enthusiasm of Bardo only in the apt classical knowledge, by no means in the ardour of his love for it. On Tito's very first entrance on to the stage, the Florentine artist of the story, Piero di Cosimo, is eager to paint him as a Sinon, not that there is treachery in his face, but that there is in it the softness and suppleness, and gliding ease of movement, and nimbleness of intellect, which, in a time of political passion, seem likely to lead to treachery, because, first, they qualify, both intellectually and morally, for the traitor's part, and, next, they serve to mask his play. From this first scene, when the fatal ease of the man's manner is first suggested, to the noble scene at the conclusion, in which he sounds, and sounds successfully, Savonarola's too eager statesmanship, with intent to betray him to the Duke of Milan and the Pope, you see Tito's character grow into the foulest treachery, simply from its consistent desire to compass every pleasant end which suggests itself to him as feasible, without openly facing, if he can help it, any one's severe displeasure.

Nor is anything drawn more finely than the peculiar species of fear which is an essential part of this character,—a fear which, in the last resort, spurs the keen intellect of the man into a certain desperate energy,

but which usually remains too cowardly even to understand itself, and lurks on in the character as a kind of unconscious resentment against those who wring from him the exercise of such an energy. A character essentially treacherous only because it is full of soft *fluid* selfishness is one of the most difficult to paint. But whether when locking up the crucifix, which Romola received from her dying brother's hands, in the little temple crowned with the figures of Ariadne and Bacchus, and fondly calling her "Regina mia," which somehow conveys that he less *loves* the woman than passionately admires her—or buying his "garment of fear," the coat of light chain armour, from the armour-smith,—or thoughtlessly deceiving the poor little contadina Tessa by the mock marriage at the carnival,—or shrinking before Romola's indignation into that frigid tone of empty affectionateness which is the clearest sign of a contracted heart,—or interpreting the Latin proclamation to the people with a veil of good-nature over his treacherous purpose,—or crowned in the feast at the Rucellai Gardens, and paling suddenly beneath Baldassarre's vindictive glance,—or petting Tessa and her children in his hiding-place on the hill,—the same wonderful power is maintained throughout, of stamping on our imagination with the full force of a master hand a character which seems naturally too fluent for the artist's purpose. There is not a more masterly piece of painting in English romance than this figure of Tito.

Of Romola it is less easy to say whether one is absolutely satisfied or not. The *soupçon* of hardness

of which one is conscious as somewhat detracting from her power, the skill with which the author has prepared us for a mental struggle exactly similar, even in its minutest features, to what might occur to-day between the claims of a sublime faith appealing to the conscience, and a distaste for miracle or vision in its prophet, the striking contrast with Tessa, the ignorant "pretty little pigeon," who thinks every one who is kind to her a saint,—all render it a little difficult to say whether we know her intimately, or whether we have only a very artistic idea of what she is *not*, and what she *is* only by inference and contrast. My own feeling is that Romola is the least perfect figure in the book, though a fine one,—that she is a shade more modernized than the others, several shades less individual, and, after all, though the pivot of her character turns, as it were, on faith, that she does not distinctly show any faith except the faith in rigid honour, in human pity, and partially also in Savonarola's personal greatness and power. I do not say the character is not natural,—I only say it is half-revealed and more suggested than fully painted, though these harder feminine characters always seem to ask to be outlined more strongly than any others.

But the great and concentrated interest of the book—at least, after the wonderful development of Tito's character—is the portrait of Savonarola, which it is almost impossible not to feel as faithful as history as it is great as romance. You see the same large human-hearted Italian Luther, narrower than Luther on some sides, owing to the thin Medicean culture against

which he led the reaction, but with a far more statesmanlike and political purpose, and far more fiery imagination, the same, in fact, whom Mr. Maurice has intellectually delineated with so much delicate fidelity in his history of modern philosophy, and who paints himself in almost everything he wrote, but who yet was never before presented clearly to the eye. This portrait evinces almost as graphic a power, and far more scrupulous care than Sir Walter Scott used in those pictures of the various Stewarts which will certainly outlive in fame the very different originals. Nothing can be finer and more impressive—nothing more difficult to make fine and impressive—than Savonarola's exhortation to Romola to return to the home from which she was flying. You see in every word the man's profound trust in God, as the author of all human ties and of all social and political ties, breaking through the fetters of his Dominican order, and asserting the divine order *in* Nature rather than the divine order *out of* Nature.

This, however, is not the finest picture given of him. The finest is contained in the profoundly pathetic scene in which Savonarola, having in the fervour of his eloquence committed God to working him a miracle at the right moment, is brought to book both by his enemies and friends on the question of the trial by fire, and kneels in prayer that in fact refuses to be prayer, but rises into a political debate within himself as to the policy of seeming to take a step which he knows he must somehow evade. "While his lips were uttering audibly *cor mundum crea in me*,

his mind was still filled with the images of the snare his enemies had prepared for him, still busy with the arguments by which he could justify himself against their taunts and accusations." But the scene is too long and too fine to spoil by snatching it from the context, and is, indeed, closely bound up with the noble picture of the encounter with Tito which follows. Our author rejects apparently the authenticity of the last great words attributed to Savonarola as he is dying on the scaffold, which Mr. Maurice accepts. "The voice of the Papal emissary," says the historian of philosophy, "was heard proclaiming that Savonarola was cut off from the Church militant and triumphant. Another voice was heard saying, 'No, not from the Church triumphant, they cannot shut me out of that.' " It is a pity that George Eliot rejects, as I suppose she does, the evidence for these words. They would have formed a far higher artistic ending to her story than the somewhat feeble and womanish chapter with which it concludes,—the only blot on the book. Large and genial as is George Eliot's sympathy with Savonarola, she has, I suppose, no wish to represent his faith as altogether triumphant. Yet Romola's faith in goodness and self-sacrifice, and in little children and "the eternal marriage of love and duty," and so forth, which the proem tells us is ever to last, would be an idle dream for the world, without a Christ in whose eternal nature all these realities live and grow.

"Felix Holt" contains so little new illustration of George Eliot's genius beyond the fragments of poetry

which first taught most of us to understand the poetic side of her imagination, that I will pass it by to speak of her two poems, "The Spanish Gipsy" and "The Legend of Jubal," which last night, I think, have been more fitly termed a hymn in praise of death. "The Spanish Gipsy," with all its rich colour, and sometimes almost Miltonic stateliness, shows, I think, that George Eliot is far greater as a poet when she interprets freely the poetry of real life in her novels and romances, than when she submits her imagination to the chains of verse. Verse to her is a fetter, and not a stimulus. In prose she is so free and dramatic that it is a disappointment to find the characters in her "Spanish Gipsy" moving in obvious obedience to the intellectual views which the reader at once discovers in relation with them. If I except, perhaps,—and even there I am doubtful,—the Spanish Duke, Don Silva, whose character is certainly finely conceived both in outline and detail, though the general effect is, I think, a little like "the misty Hyades," a haze of moral worlds melting into each other,—the chief characters of the story, especially the Gipsy chief and the Gipsy heroine, do not leave upon me any impression of dramatic power at all comparable to the leading figures of George Eliot's greater prose works. "Adam Bede" and "Romola" remain much her greatest imaginative efforts, though there is, of course, ample opportunity in the mere form of *verse* for imaginative beauties of a kind inadmissible and unadmitted in her novels.

The intellectual background of the tragedy,—for

tragedy, with interspersed narrative links, it really is, —seems to me the greatest thing about it, and it is very great; the figures which are painted in upon that background, and whose movements are intended to bring it out into relief, are, I think, hardly living and real enough to assert fully their own independent vitality. They betray the intellectual analysis to which they have been subjected, and to illustrate which they were probably created. If I may venture to interpret so great a writer's thought, I should say that the "Spanish Gipsy" is written to illustrate not merely doubly and trebly, but from four or five distinct points of view, how the inheritance of the definite streams of impulse and tradition, stored up in what we call race, often puts a tragic veto upon any attempt of spontaneous individual emotion or volition to ignore or defy their control, and to emancipate itself from the tyranny of their disputable and apparently cruel rule.

You can see the influence of the recent Darwinian doctrines, so far as they are applicable at all to moral characteristics and causes, in almost every page of the poem. How the threads of hereditary capacity and hereditary sentiment control, as with invisible cords, the orbits of even the most powerful characters,—how the fracture of those threads, so far as it can be accomplished by mere *will*, may have even a greater effect in wrecking character than moral degeneracy would itself produce,—how the man who trusts and uses the hereditary forces which natural descent has bestowed upon him, becomes a might and a centre in the world, while the man, perhaps intrinsically the nobler, who

dissipates his strength by trying to swim against the stream of his past, is neutralised and paralysed by the vain effort,—again, how a divided past, a past not really homogeneous, may weaken this kind of power, instead of strengthening it by the command of a larger experience,—all this George Eliot's poem paints with a tragical force that answers to Aristotle's fine definition of tragedy, that which “purifies” by pity and by fear.

The heroine of the book, an infant of gipsy birth, as she subsequently discovers, has been adopted by Duke Silva's mother, and when the poem opens the Duke is planning their immediate marriage. The motto of the story might be given in some of Fedalma's, the heroine's last words:—

“Our dear young love,—its breath was happiness!  
*But it had grown upon a larger life*  
*Which tore its roots asunder. We rebelled,—*  
*The larger life subdued us.”*

At the very opening of the poem the seeds of the constitutional difference of tendency between the free gipsy blood and the deeply-furrowed Spanish pride and honour are beginning to flower. Though the love between the two is perfect, Fedalma frets against the restraints of the secluded Spanish grandeur, and yearns after a larger measure of popular sympathies. On a lovely southern evening she even dances on the Plaza, the public square of Bedmar, the garrison of which Duke Alva commands (for a Moorish force is in the neighbourhood),—and this she does from the mere



yearning to express, after the Southern fashion, her spontaneous delight in the harmony of the evening, and her fulness of sympathy with the people who are looking on. This incident is the first made use of by the author to indicate the immense divergence between the inherited natures of the Gipsy and the Spanish Duke,—and this, though the difference is purely one of inheritance, for Fedalma has been brought up from her birth in the strict seclusion of a Spanish grandee. This is her excuse to her lover for the breach of conventional manners of which she has been guilty:—

“Yes, it is true. I was not wrong to dance.  
The air was filled with music, with a song  
That seemed the voice of the sweet eventide—  
The glowing light entering through eye and ear—  
That seemed our love—mine, yours—they are but one—  
Trembling through all my limbs, as fervent words  
Tremble within my soul and must be spoken.  
And all the people felt a common joy  
And shouted for the dance. A brightness soft  
As of the angels moving down to see  
Illumined the broad space. The joy, the life  
Around within me were one heaven: I longed  
To blend them visibly: I longed to dance  
Before the people—be as mounting flame  
To all that burned within them! Nay, I danced;  
There was no longing: I but did the deed,  
Being moved to do it.”

And here is the finest study of character in the poem, the Spanish Duke, who has a love in him that overflows the channels of Spanish tradition and convention, and

whose wreck of mind, due to the impulse which seizes him to break with those traditions rather than with his love, is the true theme of the tragedy :—

“A man of high-wrought strain, fastidious  
In his acceptance, dreading all delight  
That speedy dies and turns to carrion :  
His senses much exacting, deep instilled  
With keen imagination’s difficult needs ;—  
Like strong-limbed monsters studded o’er with eyes,  
Their hunger checked by overwhelming vision,  
Or that fierce lion in symbolic dream,  
Snatched from the ground by wings and new-endowed  
With a man’s thought-propelled relenting heart.  
Silva was both the lion and the man ;  
First hesitating shrank, then fiercely sprang,  
Or having sprung, turned pallid at his deed  
And loosed the prize, paying his blood for naught.  
A nature half-transformed, with qualities  
That oft bewrayed each other, elements  
Not blent but struggling, breeding strange effects,  
Passing the reckoning of his friends or foes.  
Haughty and generous, grave and passionate ;  
With tidal moments of devoutest awe,  
Sinking anon to farthest ebb of doubt ;  
Deliberating ever, till the sting  
Of a recurrent ardour made him rush  
Right against reasons that himself had drilled  
And marshalled painfully. A spirit framed  
Too proudly special for obedience,  
Too subtly pondering for mastery ;  
Born of a goddess with a mortal sire,  
Heir of flesh-fettered, weak divinity,  
Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness  
And perilous heightening of the sentient soul.”

When Fedalma is claimed by her father the Zincalo (or Gipsy) chief, and called upon by him to break from her Spanish ties and aid him in the task he has set himself of forming his gipsy tribe into an independent nation on the shore of Africa, the struggle between the two natures,—the inherited deference to a captain and father of Zarca's free, bold, and commanding nature, and the acquired nature, the passion for her Spanish lover,—begins. But in Fedalma it only appears as a struggle which is from the first decided in favour of the stronger nature she has inherited. Her love to the Duke is true and inexhaustible; but she realises at once that to wrap herself up in the subtle tendernesses of her ducal lover, and leave her father to wrestle alone with his great enterprise on a foreign shore, will make her utterly unworthy even of her own place in life, and so fill her with the conviction that she is mean, and selfish, and worthless; that she would not be worthy even of the part she would choose, and would sink in her own and Silva's esteem. So she goes with her father, broken-hearted but firm, and breaks away from Silva.

The Duke, on the other hand, tramples on the ties of rank, family, and country, for the sake of his love. He gives up his place as commander of the fortress to follow Fedalma, hoping to win her back to him. Finding the Gipsy chief firm, and his daughter inexorably resolved to sacrifice her love to what she thinks her duty, he sacrifices his own place in life altogether, and swears fealty to the Zincalo chief rather than lose his betrothed. In the mean time the latter has to earn

his Moorish safe-conduct to Africa by taking the fortress of Bedmar, which Silva had commanded, and Silva finds, to his unutterable horror and remorse, that the fortress has been surprised and all his own dearest companions in arms slain by the troop of Zincali with whom he had united himself. In his insanity of remorse he kills Zarca,—Fedalma's father,—and the tragedy ends with their final separation: she to take, so far as she may, her father's place as ruler of the Gipsy people on the African shore; he to get absolved for his sin, and to recover his knightly name as a Spanish soldier of the Cross. The point of the tragedy, however, is the contrast between the moral strength of the Gipsy chief, Zarca, whose inherited qualities of mind and body and whole life had been absolutely in harmony, and the comparative weakness of his daughter, in whom Spanish training and Spanish ties had partly neutralised her gipsy blood, and, again, between both of these and the absolute wreck of character in Silva when he breaks his whole ancestral traditions, and tries to make a sacrifice of them to love.

The same striking theme is illustrated from several other points of view. Silva's uncle, Father Isidor, the prior of San Domingo, the priest of the Spanish Inquisition, whose nature is all held within the deep-cut channels of Spanish tradition, within the ideas which dominated the Spanish chivalry and the Spanish faith, is the moral foil to his nephew. He stands out,—keen, hard, loyal to his own ideas, domineering without hesitation, and crushing without a scruple all even in himself which tends to divide himself,—as the model

of the morality which acts rigidly and severely, volition and nature being in perfect unison, on a fixed and customary type.

But apart even from these leading characters, perpetually recurring touches throughout the whole poem show how entirely this theme had occupied George Eliot's imagination. Take but as one instance, this, on the inherited forces which form the characters of monkeys *à propos* of the juggler's ape:—

“ Man thinks  
Brutes have no wisdom, since they know not his :  
Can we divine their world ?—the hidden life  
That mirrors us as hideous shapeless power,  
Cruel supremacy of sharp-edged death,  
Or fate that leaves a bleeding mother robbed ?  
*Oh, they have long tradition and swift speech,*  
*Can tell with touches and sharp darting cries*  
*Whole histories of timid races taught*  
*To breathe in terror by red-handed man.”*

It is impossible, indeed, to speak too highly of the intellectual conception at the basis of the poem, and the finish and power with which it is worked out and adorned. Thus, how fine for its purpose is the scene between Don Silva and the Jewish astrologer, Sephardo, who perceives so clearly the scientific limits to astrological prediction, that he refines away and distinguishes till his science is but, as Silva tells him, to pinch

“ With confident selection these few grains  
And call them verity, from out the dust  
Of crumbling error.”

This discussion between Silva and the Jewish astrologer on the decaying science of astral influence, and on those contingencies of human life which its clearest visions leave unsolved,—and again, this glimpse of a subtle scientific mind which, while it had lost confidence in the boasted power of the science, still clung cautiously to the dwindling grain of truth which it still believed that the science contained, are, as it were, poetical glosses and commentaries on the main theme of the story, showing how the past of Europe, in that age of religious inquisition and scientific discovery, was pressing upon the present, how much of it was crumbling away beneath the intellectual solvent of the new thought, and yet how keenly the most vigilant and subtle minds of the age felt the danger of breaking,—even intellectually,—with the past, and how anxiously, as they cut away the superfluous traditions, they held to everything which had not yet been disproved.

This fading belief, like other fading beliefs, is intended to have its effect on Silva's mind, disposing him to distrust both the social and religious traditions in which he had been brought up, and therefore to trust more amply the passion of love in his heart which he knew to be both noble and true. Yet even from the first he, too, cannot keep his mind off the danger of the schism in his life which he feels approaching, and of which his mere love for a nature so untrammelled by tradition as Fedalma's cannot but warn him. How finely he says, in his first love scene with Fedalma:—

"Ah, yes! all preciousness  
 To mortal hearts is guarded by a fear.  
 All love fears loss, and most that loss supreme,  
 Its own perfection—seeing, feeling, change  
 From high to lower, dearer to less dear.  
 Can love be careless? If we lost our love,  
 What should we find?—with this sweet Past torn off,  
 Our lives deep scarred just where their beauty lay?  
 The best we found thenceforth were still a worse:  
*The only better is a Past that lives  
 On through an added Present, stretching still  
 In hope unchecked by shaming memories  
 To life's last breath."*

While the intellectual ground-plan of the tragedy is exquisitely worked out, the characters are to me faint, misty, imperfectly executed,—and this applies especially to the Gipsy chief and his daughter. The lyrics, too, though one or two are of great beauty, do not captivate me like the reflective poetry. It is a great meditative, not a great dramatic work,—its meditation inlaid, as all true meditation must be, with keen and clear observation. Of touches of fine humour of George Eliot's grave kind there are many. Of wise apophthegms there are still more, and of exquisitely tender sentiment and fancy as much as heart could wish. But as a poem it is, I think, less striking than the author's very characteristic and sad poem on "The Legend of Jubal." And as a work of imagination it certainly falls far below her greater prose works.

The subject of this latter poem, which I make no apology for analysing, not only as a work of art, but as a doctrinal work,—for so great a writer as George

Eliot should be studied as a thinker as well as a painter,—is praise of death, and of the fulness of energy which the dark inevitable fate that awaits us has lent to human life while it lasts. Cain is introduced flying from the wrath of God, and seeking some land where other and kinder gods ruled, and might remit the stern decree of death. He finds such a land as he supposes, and for hundreds of years his descendants grow up around him, without hearing of death, in glad idleness. In some of the sweetest lines of the poem we are told how

“They laboured gently, as a maid who weaves  
Her hair in mimic mats, and pauses oft  
And strokes across her hand the tresses soft,  
Then peeps to watch the poised butterfly  
Or little burthened ants that homeward hie.  
Time was but leisure to their lingering thought,  
There was no need for haste to finish aught;  
But sweet beginnings were repeated still  
Like infant babblings that no task fulfil;  
For love, that loved not change, constrained the simple will.”

Into this world, unconscious of doom, the knowledge of death enters by the accidental death of one of Lamech's children, and Cain is compelled to disclose the fate which remains for all of them by that stern will of Jehovah, which he has hoped, but failed, to escape by his long pilgrimage:—

“And a new spirit from that hour came o'er  
The race of Cain; soft idlesse was no more,  
But even the sunshine had a heart of care,  
Smiling with hidden dread,—a mother fair



Who folding to her breast a dying child  
Beams with feigned joy that but makes sadness mild.  
Death was now lord of life, and at his word  
Time, vague as air before, new terrors stirred,  
With measured wing now audibly arose  
Throbbing through all things to some unseen close.  
Now glad Content by clutching Haste was torn,  
And Work grew eager and Device was born.  
It seemed the light was never loved before.  
Now each man said, 'Twill go and come no more.'  
No budding branch, no pebble from the brook,  
No form, no shadow, but new dearness took  
From the one thought that life must have an end;  
And the last parting now began to send  
Diffusive dread through love and wedded bliss,  
Thrilling them into finer tenderness.  
Then Memory disclosed her face divine,  
That like the calm nocturnal lights doth shine  
Within the soul and shows the sacred graves,  
And shows the presence that no sunlight craves,  
No space, no warmth, but moves among them all;  
Gone and yet here, and coming at each call,  
With ready voice and eyes that understand,  
And lips that ask a kiss, and dear responsive hand.  
Thus to Cain's race Death was tear-watered seed  
Of various life, and action-shaping need."

The vivifying effect of this knowledge of Death is described especially in relation to the three sons of Lamech,—Jabal, who teaches the dumb animals to love and obey him,—Tubal Cain, who founds the industrial arts,—Jubal, in whom the new sense of limitation breeds the spirit of poetry and music:—

"A yearning for some hidden soul of things,  
Some outward touch complete on inner springs

That vaguely moving bred a lonely pain,—  
A want that did but stronger grow with gain  
Of all good else, as spirits might be sad  
For lack of speech to tell us they are glad."

Jubal invents the lyre and the art of song, and receives unmeasured glory and gratitude from his kindred for his gift to them of the new faculty, till he grows weary of hearing the echo of his own words, and resolves to seek some distant land where he can find new harmonies and give up his heart to solitary raptures. He journeys on for ages, sowing music everywhere as he goes, till he reaches the sea, and finds himself so utterly unable to render again the music of that "mighty harmonist" that he touches his lyre no more, and longs again for the land where first he realized the power which is ebbing away from him as his "heart widens with its widening home." He returns to find his name famous, and temples built in his praise; but also to find a generation which knows him not and which hardly notices the feeble old man who is the true claimant for these divine honours. Jubal feels a passionate desire to identify himself with the object of all this veneration. A germ of selfishness lurks in him still:—

"What though his song should spread from man's small race  
Out through the myriad worlds that people space,  
And make the heavens one joy-diffusing choir?  
Still, 'mid that vast would throb the keen desire  
Of this poor aged flesh, this eventide,  
This twilight soon in darkness to subside,

This little pulse of self that, having glowed  
 Through thrice three centuries, and divinely strowed  
 The light of music through the vague of sound,  
*Ached smallness still in good that had no bound."*

In other words, the yearning to be personally recognized and identified as the giver of these great gifts to man was the poor alloy still left in Jubal's nature, —an alloy which the mere fear of death had, by the way, apparently *stimulated* rather than diminished; for George Eliot expressly tells us that Tubal-Cain at least, and still more, I should think, Jubal,

. . . "wot not of treachery,  
 Or greedy lust, or any ill to be,  
 Save the one ill of sinking into naught,  
 Banished from action and act-shaping thought."

However, Death itself is to purify Jubal from this insatiable longing for personal recognition as the author of that music and song which the fear of Death had generated in him; for Jubal's claim to be the inventor of the lyre is treated as a profanity, and he is beaten and driven away from the temple built in his honour, to die alone. Dying, a vision comes to him of the "angel of his life and death," who teaches him that his life had been full enough of blessing without his receiving in his own person the honour due to it,—that

"in thy soul to bear  
 The growth of song, and feel the sweet unrest  
 Of the world's spring-tide in thy conscious breast,"

was itself the greatest of all gifts, far greater than

any gratitude which might seem to be due to it. Indeed, it was the very intensity of the light he had radiated which caused his old age to be despised,—as a shrine too mean for a rumour so divine. Nay, it was the final blessing of Death,—so I understand the author to teach,—that, after stimulating such creative activity as Jubal's, it destroyed the "fleshy self" with all its egotisms, and left him only an impersonal immortality in that human gladness which, in its rejoicings, does *not* recognize the personal origin of its joys:—

"This was thy lot, to feel, create, bestow,  
And that immeasurable life to know  
From which the fleshy self falls shrivelled, dead,  
A seed primeval that has forests bred.  
It is the glory of the heritage  
Thy life has left, that makes thy outcast age;  
Thy limbs shall lie, dark, tombless on the sod,  
Because thou shinest in man's soul a god,  
Who found and gave new passion and new joy,  
That naught but earth's destruction can destroy.  
Thy gifts to give was thine of men alone;  
'Twas but in giving that thou could'st atone  
For too much wealth amid their poverty."

And with these warnings in his ears Jubal is left at the close of this grand but melancholy legend,

"Quitting mortality, a quenched sun-wave,  
The All-creating Presence for his grave."

Whether the poetic form is or is not generally adequate to the thought, at all events the thought itself is gravely passionate, expressing a strange depth of grat-

itude for the power of Death to stimulate energy and give a new keenness of emotion to the race; and finally for Death's power to rob the individual soul of the one selfish husk which clings to all such energy, however disinterested,—the craving for personal recognition.

So I understand the teaching of this very fine legend,—and, in parts at least, fine poem,—though the deepest part of the teaching, the part of it most likely to strike the imagination and affect the heart of its readers, seems to me profoundly false. I have noted the apparent contradiction implied in praising Death for the stimulus it gives to the generally beneficent perhaps, but certainly egotistic desire for immortal fame, and yet praising it *also* for separating the shrivelled, dead husk of the “fleshly self” from the immeasurable life it has engendered in generations to come.

But there is a deeper vice still in the doctrine that Death extinguishes that selfish egotism which, as George Eliot so finely says, “ached smallness still in good that has no bound.” To extinguish the *power* of selfish feeling is *not* really a victory over selfish feeling; Jubal dies before he has gained any such victory. If he had gained the victory, there would have been no praise due to Death, by which he could not have gained it. To be willing to submit to annihilation for the infinite good of others might be a noble and disinterested attitude of mind, but then such willingness is not the gift of Death, but of Life, and he who has it can gain nothing by Death, while the universe

loses by it the very flower of its life. The death of the corn of wheat which, "except it die, abideth alone, but if it die bringeth forth much fruit," is not the death of annihilation, but of transfiguration; and the transfiguration of the highest thing man can know, personal love, involves the retention and development of that highest element, the personality, not its degradation and extinction. If Jubal, instead of being quenched like "a sun-wave" in the "*grave*" of an "All-creating Presence,"—what a paradox is there!—had learnt to renounce the passionate desire to be identified with his own gift to mankind, he would have ceased to "ache smallness still in good that had no bound," in a far higher and truer sense than any in which that can be asserted of a "quenched sun-wave" which has ceased to be at all. The doctrine of this poem seems to me to come to this: either that Death creates by making us smart under the consciousness of limitation, by stinging self-love into haste and energy, or, that purely disinterested creation—creation, without the thirst for personal recognition—is not for personal beings like men at all, but the privilege only of unconscious and impersonal life. But what we do actually experience, in however imperfect a degree, cannot be *impossible* to us,—and the creative power of purely disinterested love has no fascination, indeed, strictly speaking, no *meaning*, for us, if we drop the thought of the personal centre from which it flows. "Love" implies the self-surrender of a conscious being to the well-being of others. An

unconscious stream of beneficent energy is in no sense "love," and excites none of the moral awe which the display of any divine love excites.

Moreover, even the true and undeniable effect of death in stimulating energy, and making men, by suggesting loss, conscious of the love which otherwise they might hardly know, is more or less conditional on death's being believed to be *not* final. A man with death near at hand will seldom undertake any task unconnected with the life into which he believes himself about to plunge, because it seems hardly worth while. Those who lose their belief in immortality too often sink under the moral paralysis of a creed which seems to leave so little that it is worth while to attempt. Especially, the loss of faith in immortality usually saps the deepest and tenderest affections of human nature, instead of giving them, as George Eliot intimates, a new tenderness. It is clear that the apprehension of loss cannot *create* feeling;—it can and does only bring home to the heart the depth of feeling already cherished there. But the belief in a final death does much more than this: it undermines our respect for the intrinsic worth of a nature so ephemeral, and makes it seem more reasonable,—perhaps I should say makes it *really* more reasonable,—to contract our love into better keeping with the short minutes during which alone it can be entertained.

I have analyzed this poem, and even criticised its doctrine at some length, because it is one of the few direct confessions of faith which the great critic I am

criticising has put on record, though indications of similar views are freely scattered through her works; and it is impossible to understand so deep and so thoroughly intellectual a painter without knowing her deepest thoughts and measuring them to some extent by one's own. To me, indeed, George Eliot's scepticism seems one of the greatest of the limitations on her genius. One rises from the study of her works, profoundly impressed with their thoroughness, their depth, their rich colouring, their marvellous humour, their laborious conscientiousness, their noble ethical standard, *and* their weariness,—the weariness of a great speculative intellect which can find no true spring of elasticity, and in vain forces from herself a certain amount of enthusiasm for optimist views of that “wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world,” from which Shelley makes Beatrice Cenci recoil in horror. The only flaw I can see in George Eliot's intellect consists in her attempts to conform her mind cheerfully to facts against which she inwardly rebels. In “*The Mill on the Floss*” she spoilt her story by endeavouring to paint the physiological attraction of a certain kind of animal character for a nature far above it, as if it were more nearly irresistible than in fact I think it is,—and, as far as I can see, only because she had arrived at a conviction that, as physiological attractions exert a great influence in human life, realists should put a certain amount of force on their own dislike to recognize them fully; and, in the poem I have just criticised, George Eliot seems to me to make an ex-



traordinary blunder for so fine and subtle an intellect, in not recognizing clearly that Death, if it could really quench the *possibility* of selfish feeling, would in no way carry on and complete the triumph of true disinterestedness, but, on the contrary, would finally prevent that triumph. But, in truth, George Eliot was here making the best of a bad business,—trying to discover virtues in inevitable destiny because it is inevitable. It would have been more like her, I think, to admit at once that while the expectation of Death does actually stimulate finite and selfish men to energy, the hope by which it thus stimulates them is empty air, if Death be all it seems. The laborious enthusiasm in the “Legend of Jubal” seems to me profound melancholy in disguise,—melancholy striving for a calm and serenity it does not feel.

George Eliot, with a faith like that of her own “Dinah,” would, to my mind, be one of the greatest intellectual personages the world had ever seen. Her imagination would gain that vivacity and spring the absence of which is its only artistic defect; her noble ethical conceptions would win certainty and grandeur; her singularly just and impartial judgment would lose the tinge of gloom which now seems always to pervade it; and her poetic feelings would be no longer weighed down by the superincumbent mass of a body of sceptical thought with which they struggle for the mastery in vain. Few minds at once so speculative and so creative have ever put their mark on literature. If she cannot paint the glow of human enterprise like Scott, or sketch with the easy rapidity of Fielding, she

can do what neither of them could do—see and explain the relation of the broadest and commonest life to the deepest springs of philosophy and science. With a quicker pulse of life, with a richer, happier faith, I hardly see the limit to her power.



## VI.

### THE POETRY OF MATTHEW ARNOLD.

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H AZLITT, writing of one of Wordsworth's latest and more classical poems, "Laodamia," describes it as having "the sweetness, the gravity, the strength, the beauty, and the languor of death,—calm contemplation and majestic pains." There also we have, in one of Hazlitt's terse and sententious criticisms, the aroma of the finest poems of Wordsworth's greatest poetical disciple—one, too, who is the disciple of Wordsworth, emphatically in his later rather than in his earlier phase; Wordsworth schooled into a grace and majesty not wholly meditative, but in part, at least, critical; Wordsworth the conscious artist as well as poet; not Wordsworth the rugged rhapsodist of spiritual simplicity and natural joy. "The sweetness, the gravity, the strength, the beauty, and the languor of death,—calm contemplation and majestic pains,"—all these may be found in the most characteristic and most touching of Mr. Arnold's

poems; in the melancholy with which the sick King of Bokhara broods over the fate of the wretch whom his pity and power could not save from the expiation he himself courted; in the gloomy resentment of Mycerinus against the unjust gods who cut short his effort to reign justly over his people; in the despair of Empedocles on Etna at his failure to solve the riddle of the painful earth—his weariness of “the devouring flame of thought,” the naked, eternally restless mind whose thirst he could not slake: in those dejected lines written by a death-bed, in which Mr. Arnold contrasts the hopes of youth with what he deems the highest gain of manhood, “calm;” in the noble sonnet which commemorates Sophocles as one whom “business could not make dull nor passion wild;” in the fine “Memorial Verses,” wherein he praises Wordsworth for assuaging that dim trouble of humanity which Goethe could only dissect and describe; in the melodious sadness of the personal retrospects in “Resignation,” “A Southern Night,” and “Self-Dependence;” in the large concessions to Heine’s satiric genius, made in the verses composed at his tomb at Montmartre; in the consciously hopeless cravings of “The Scholar Gipsy” and “Thyrsis,” after a reconciliation between the intellect of man and the magic of Nature; and most characteristically of all, in the willing half-sympathy given by Mr. Arnold to those ascetics of the Grande Chartreuse, whom his intellect condemns, and in the even deeper enthusiasm with which he addresses, in the midst of melancholy Alpine solitudes, that modern refugee from a

sick world, the author of "Obermann," delineates the intellectual weakness and dejection of the age, and feebly though poetically shadows forth his own hopeless hope of a remedy. In all these poems alike, and many others which we have not space to enumerate—in all, indeed, in which Mr. Arnold's genius really gains a voice—there is "the sweetness, gravity, strength, beauty, and the languor of death," blended in the spirit of a calm contemplativeness which takes all the edge off anguish and makes the poet's pains "majestic;" for Mr. Arnold's poems are one long variation on a single theme, the divorce between the soul and the intellect, and the depth of spiritual regret and yearning which that divorce produces. Yet there is a didactic keenness with the languor, an eagerness of purpose with the despondency, which give half the individual flavour to his lyrics. A note of confidence lends authority to his scepticism; the tone of his sadness is self-contained, sure, and even imperious, instead of showing the ordinary relaxation of loss; and the reader of his poetry is apt to rise from it with the same curious questioning in his mind which Mr. Arnold has put into the mouth of Nature in the verses called "Morality,"—a questioning after the origin of "that severe, that earnest air," which breathes through poetry of all but hopeless yearning and all but unmixed regret.

No doubt one kind of answer to this question is that Mr. Arnold has *inherited* from the great teacher of Rugby and historian of the Punic War the lofty didactic impulse which marks all his prose and poetry

alike, although the substance of the lessons he is so eager to give has sadly dwindled in the descent from father to son. But that is but one sort of answer, which explains rather the spring from which he derives the strain in his temperament which has impressed a certain nervous depth and moral "distinction" upon poetry of which the drift is uniformly a realistic melancholy, than the source from which he has fed the flame of his genius and justified the calm egotism of its literary rescripts. Intellectually, Mr. Arnold's descent, as he himself is always foremost to acknowledge, is to be derived in almost equal degree from Goethe the critic and artist, and from Wordsworth the poet; both of them, observe, marked by the same character of clear, self-contained, thoughtful, heroic egotism. We say Goethe the critic and artist—for we recognise far less in Goethe's deepest and most perfect vein of poetry that conscious self-culture and that lucidity of enthusiastic self-study which lend the charm to his conversations, his novels, and his criticisms. And Mr. Arnold, even in his capacity of poet—we are not about to touch his essays, except so far as they throw a light on his poetry—is always aiming at self-culture, and singing, not songs of involuntary melody, but of carefully-attuned aspiration or regret. From both Goethe and Wordsworth, again, he has learned to treat his own individuality with a certain exaltation of touch, an air of Olympian dignity and grace, which lends the fascination of "the grand style" to lyrics so sad that they might otherwise trail upon the earth too slack and limp a growth. Mr. Arnold has always

impressed on his poems that air of aristocratic selectness and conscious exclusiveness which Goethe, even after being the popular poet of Germany, claimed for his own writings. Eckermann tells how, going to dine with Goethe one day in 1828, and finding him dressed in "the black frock coat and star in which I (Eckermann) always liked best to see him," the stately old man took him aside into the window, apart from the rest of the dinner company, only to make the following confidence:—

"Dear child, he said, I will confide something to you, which will at once give you a lift over many puzzles, and which may be an assistance to you throughout your whole life. *My writings cannot become popular*; any one who thinks they can, and strives to make them so, is in error. They are not written for the masses, but only for individual men who themselves desire and seek something analogous, and who are pursuing similar lines of thought."

We can well imagine Mr. Arnold some twenty years hence, dressed with similar care and wearing the order conferred upon him the other day by the king of Italy for his services to the duke of Genoa, making a precisely similar confidence to some "young lion of the *Daily Telegraph*" engaged in the study of his writings, and disturbed at finding that his poems secure so much less recognition from the people than those of Tennyson or Morris. And he would be far more right than Goethe, for Goethe's songs are popular in their very essence; it is only those of his writings in which his cool, reflective spirit has found expression, like "Tasso," or "Iphigenia," or "Wilhelm Meis-

ter," or "Faust," to which his ingenuous confidence to Eckermann can properly apply. But a similar confession would apply to *all* Mr. Arnold's poems, which draw their life entirely from the proud self-conscious zone of modern experience, and have scarce given forth one single note of popular grief or joy. It would apply, too, for a different reason, to almost all Wordsworth's poems, not because Wordsworth belonged to the aristocratic school of modern culture—quite the reverse; but because he steeped himself in the rapture of a meditative solitude which puts him at a distance from all mankind, and makes him loom large, as it were, out of the magnifying folds of one of his own mountain mists.

But Mr. Arnold, in borrowing from Goethe the artist and critic, and from Wordsworth the poet, something of what we have called their style of clear heroic egotism, has not borrowed from either of them the characteristic motive and individuality which in them justifies that style. Had he done so he could not be the original poet he is. He is neither the poet of mere self-culture, nor the solitary interpreter of Nature, but something between the two; a careful student and graphic as well as delicate expositor of the spiritual pangs and restlessness of this age on the one hand, and of the refreshments and anodynes to be derived from Nature on the other. And he is more or less conscious, moreover, in spite of some youthful theories of the true function of poetry which he has had to disregard, that it is in the elaborate delineation of his own poetic individuality that these distresses



and these consolations receive their reconciliation and their best chance of being practically combined. He feels that his poetic personality has a certain grandeur and meaning in it; that while he has something of Goethe's calm, critical eye for human life and its confusions, he has also something of the meditative thirst and meditative joy of Wordsworth; and that the combination of these two poetic qualifications gives him a distinctive power of his own. "Non me tua turbida terrent dicta," he said once in his majestic way to his critics, "Dii me terrent et Jupiter hostis." There is no better key to his true poetical aims than the very characteristic poem of his own, addressed in November, 1849, to the author of "Obermann:"—

“Yet of the spirits who have reign’d  
In this our troubled day,  
I know but two, who have attain’d,  
Save thee, to see their way.

“By England’s lakes, in grey old age,  
His quiet home one keeps;  
And one, the strong, much-toiling sage,  
In German Weimar sleeps.

“But Wordsworth’s eyes avert their ken  
From half of human fate;  
And Goethe’s course few sons of men  
May think to emulate.

“For he pursued a lonely road,  
His eyes on Nature’s plan;  
Neither made man too much a God,  
Nor God too much a man.

“ Strong was he, with a spirit free  
 From mists, and sane, and clear;  
 Clearer, how much! than ours—yet we  
 Have a worse course to steer.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ But we brought forth and rear’d in hours  
 Of change, alarm, surprise,  
 What shelter to grow ripe is ours?  
 What leisure to grow wise?

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
 Too harass’d, to attain  
 Wordsworth’s sweet calm, or Goethe’s wide  
 And luminous view to gain.”

Nevertheless, that is precisely the combination which Mr. Arnold has tried to attain for himself, and is ambitious of illustrating, through himself, for others. He tries to combine a spirit “free from mists, and sane, and clear,” with Wordsworth’s “sweet calm” and joy in the freshness of Nature. And if he has in any degree succeeded, he knows that the success will best be realized, as those great masters’ greater successes were realized, in a delineation of his own poetic individuality. Accordingly, it is really self-delineation of a kind like to theirs, though self-delineation of aims and aspirations about midway between theirs, which gives the charm to his poems. Thus in all his poetical success, it is easy to distinguish two distinct strands: first, the clear recognition (with Goethe) of our spiritual unrest, and the manful effort to control it; next, the clear recognition (with Wordsworth) of the balm to be found in sincere communion

with Nature. To the treatment of both these elements again he has given a certain freshness and individuality of his own.

We will first indicate generally his treatment of the former point. His characteristic effort on this side has been to introduce into a delineation, at once consistent and various in its aspects, of the intellectual difficulties, hesitations, and distresses of cultivated minds in the nineteenth century, a vein of imperious serenity—what he himself calls “sanity” of treatment—which may stimulate the mind to bear the pain of constantly disappointed hope. Yet, oddly enough, his early theory of poetry would have restrained him from giving us such a picture of moral and intellectual sufferings at all; and he even suppressed a poem, “Empedocles on Etna,” which had already gained a certain reputation, and which, beneath a thin disguise of antiquity, discussed half the religious difficulties of modern days, simply because he declared it poetically faulty to choose a situation in which “everything is to be endured, nothing to be done.” It was a condemnation of every successful poem he has written, emphatically so of the long expositions of our modern spiritual paralysis and fever in the two poems to the author of “Obermann,” of the lines at Heine’s grave, of the stanzas at the Grand Chartreuse; indeed, we may say, of all his poems except the classic play “Merope,” which probably Mr. Arnold himself now regards as a failure, since he does not include it in his collected poems. “Empedocles on Etna,” according to Mr. Arnold in his preface to the edition of 1853,

was poetically faulty because it was a picture of "a continuous state of mental distress, unrelieved by incident or hope," which is quite true, and not less true of almost all his other poems. But when he said that it was also unrelieved by *resistance*, he was unjust to himself. What alone renders all this delineation of moral distress and spiritual bewilderment which pervades this poem endurable is that there is a steady current of resistance, a uniform "sanity" of self-control in the treatment of the painful symptoms so subtly described. Empedocles, in the course of his meditations on suicide on the slopes of Etna, no doubt dwells much on the feeble and false religious philosophy of the time, the credulous self-flatteries of human sophistry, and the sharp antagonism between clear self-knowledge and the superstitions of the age; but he also makes a vigorous appeal to the manliness, fortitude, and sobriety of spirit with which all the disappointments and failures of humanity ought to be met, asserts that it is the part of a man of true wisdom to curb immoderate desires, to bow to the might of forces he cannot control, and, while nursing no "extravagant hope," to yield to no despair. And when, after thus completely justifying his own "sanity of soul," he confesses himself unable to act as he approves, and leaps into the fiery crater, the reader feels that the blunder of the poet has not been in painting the suffering too highly—for it is not highly coloured—but in selecting for the sufferer a man of too low a courage, and in making his acts a foil to his thoughts. So far from there being no resistance, no breakwater op-

posed to the flowing tides of mental suffering, Empedocles creates the sole interest of the poem by his manly swimming against the stream of despondency, to which later he suddenly abandons himself without sufficient cause assigned. It is like the story of the man who said "I go not," and then went, without giving any glimpse of the reason for his change of mind—a story which, without any attempt to fill in the missing link, would certainly not be a sufficient subject for a poem. It seems to us striking enough that the very charm of Mr. Arnold's method in dealing with this hectic fever of the modern intellect,—for Empedocles, if a true ancient, is certainly a still truer modern in his argument,—is due to his own inconsistency; is due, that is, to the fact that when his subject required him to paint and justify the last stages of moral despondency—and his intellectual view was sceptical enough to be in sympathy with his subject—he could not help expending his chief strength in cutting away the moral ground from under his hero's feet, by insisting that the well-spring of despair was, after all, not in the hostility of Nature or of human circumstances, but in the licence of immoderate desires and of insatiable self-will. And it is so throughout his poems. He cannot paint the restlessness of the soul—though he paints it vividly and well—without painting also the attitude of resistance to it, without giving the impression of a head held high above it, a nature that fixes the limits beyond which the corrosion of distrust and doubt shall not go, a deep speculative melancholy kept at bay, *not* by

faith, but by a kind of domineering temperance of nature. This is the refrain of almost all his poems. He yields much to this melancholy—intellectually, we should say, almost everything—but morally, he bids it keep its distance, and forbids it to engulph him.

It is this singular equipoise between the doubts that devour, and the intrepid sobriety that excites him to resistance, which gives the peculiar tone to Mr. Arnold's poems. He has not the impulse or *abandon* of nature for a pure lyric melancholy, such as Shelley could pour forth in words that almost make the heart weep, as, for instance, in the "Lines Written in Dejection in Naples." Again, Mr. Arnold has nothing of the proud faith that conquers melancholy and that gives to the poems of Wordsworth their tone of rapture. Yet he hits a wonderful middle note between the two. The "lyrical cry," as he himself has finely designated the voice in which the true poetic exaltation of feeling expresses itself, is to be found in a multitude of places in his poems; but in him it neither utters the dejection of the wounded spirit nor the joy of the victorious spirit, but rather the calm of a steadfast equanimity in conflict with an unconquerable and yet also unconquering destiny—a firm mind without either deep shadows of despair or high lights of faith, only the lucid dusk of an intellectual twilight. Perhaps there is no more characteristic specimen of the exact note of Mr. Arnold's "lyrical cry" than the close of the fine poem called "Resignation:"—

"Enough, we live!—and if a life,  
With large results so little rife,

Though bearable, seem hardly worth  
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth;  
Yet, Fausta! the mute turf we tread,  
The solemn hills around us spread,  
This stream which falls incessantly,  
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,  
If I might lend their life a voice,  
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.  
And even could the intemperate prayer  
Man iterates, while these forbear,  
For movement, for an ampler sphere,  
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear,  
Not milder is the general lot  
Because our spirits have forgot,  
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,  
The something that infects the world."

Such is the general nature of the human strand in Mr. Arnold's poetry, the restless spiritual melancholy which he pictures, resists, and condemns. But there is another permanent strand in it, that due partly to his love for Wordsworth and partly to his love for Nature, of whom Wordsworth was the greatest of modern priests. Mr. Arnold finds in the beauty and sublimity of natural scenes the best assuagement of intellectual unrest and moral perplexities. Nature is his balm for every woe. He does not find in her, as Wordsworth did, the key to any of life's mysteries, or the source of hope, but only the best kind of distraction, which, while it does not relax but rather elevates the tone of the spirit, and even furnishes it with a certain number of symbols for its thought and emotion, also lightens the burden of the mystery by

its cooling and refreshing influence. The "languor of death," of which Hazlitt speaks, as characterising "Laodamia," and of which we have said that it also characterises Mr. Arnold's poetry, drives him to Nature for relief; and though it generally haunts him even under Nature's sweetest spell, yet you can see that he finds the relief, that the languor is less and the pulse stronger while he dwells on Nature's life. And it is this sense of pure refreshment in Nature, this ease of mind she partially brings him, this calm amid feverish strife, this dew after hot thought, that determines the style of his studies of Nature. His poetry of this kind is the sweetest, the most tranquilizing, the most quieting of its sort to be found in English literature. In Wordsworth, Nature is the occasion, but his own mind always the *object*, of thought, whether he exercises amidst the "host of golden daffodils" "that inward eye that is the bliss of solitude," or finds in the teaching of a daisy the true medicine for discontent. You cannot plunge yourself in the poetry of Wordsworth without being mentally braced and refreshed; but then it takes an effort to enter into a world so unique, "so solemn and serene," and so far removed from that of ordinary life. Throw off the yoke of the world sufficiently to steep yourself in Wordsworth, and no doubt the refreshment is more complete and the flow of new strength more full than you can expect from the verse of Mr. Arnold; for Mr. Arnold's poetry of Nature is not like Wordsworth's, a newly-created meditative universe, distilled by the poet's mind out of Nature; it is a pale tran-



script of Nature, painted in the clear, dewy water-colours of tranquil memory. What he says of his own debt to Wordsworth would, if it did not imply a more vivifying and animating influence than Mr. Arnold's poetry ever really exerts, be more nearly applicable to most men's debt to *him* :—

“ He laid us as we lay at birth,  
On the cool flowery lap of earth ;  
Smiles broke from us, and we had ease.  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again ;  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
Our youth returned ; for there was shed  
On spirits that had long been dead—  
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd—  
The freshness of the early world.”

Now that does not strike us as by any means an accurate description of the influence of Wordsworth's poetry on the mind. Wordsworth does not restore us to the ease and freshness of our youth, he rather baptizes us in his own strong and unique spirit. He has a spell of his own, no doubt a cooling and refreshing one, but also a powerful and transforming one. It is due to the strong, keen, meditative simplicity of a mind that is as full of rapture as it is full of insight. It is Wordsworth himself far more than the lark he watched, whose “canopy of glorious light” snatches us out of ourselves, and from whom we learn to be true “to the kindred points of heaven and home.” It is Wordsworth himself far more than the cuckoo to which he listened “till he did beget that golden time

again," who tells us the old enchanting tale "of visionary hours." The strength and freshness Wordsworth gives us is not the strength and freshness of childhood or youth, but the strength and freshness of a poet on whom "the power of hills" had rested till he lived in a purer world than ours. When Wordsworth says of the solitary reaper,—

"Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain.  
Oh listen! for the vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound!"

—the charm is far less in the song, of which he gives so thrilling a conception, than in those grateful "impulses of deeper birth" springing out of his own heart, of which he tells us a still more thrilling story. Wordsworth is the last poet of whom we should say that he makes us children again. He gives us a new youth, not the old—a youth of deeper serenity, and of a far more truly spiritual joy. But for that very reason, it takes an effort to plunge into him; the change from the busy and crowded levels of human life to his poetry is too great and sudden to be easily taken; it requires a regeneration of our senses as well as a change of scene. But with Mr. Arnold it is different. He does not create for us a new world out of the suggestions and influences of Nature, he only makes us feel keenly the beauty and delicacy of the spectacle which Nature, as she is in her paler and more subdued moods, presents to us, and her strange power of resting and refreshing the mind wearied by small human responsibilities. His eye is always on the object itself,

not on the spiritual lessons it discloses. And he paints in the most restful way. He never concentrates, like Tennyson, so that the imagination is at some pain to follow all the touches crowded into little space; he never disembodies, like Shelley, till it becomes an effort to apprehend essences so rare; it is seldom that he paints, like Byron, with a brush dipped as deeply in the glowing passions of his own heart as in the colours of the external world. He paints Nature, like the author of "*The Elegy in a Country Churchyard*," with the cool liquid, rather weary tone of one who comes to the scenery to take a heart from it, instead of giving the heart to it; but he does it with infinitely more of the modern tenderness and insight for Nature than Gray possessed, and with far more flowing and continuous descriptive power—far less of that polished mosaic-work manner which makes Gray's verses read as if he had forgotten most of the preceding links before completing and enamelling the next link in the chain. In Mr. Arnold's studies of Nature you see the quiet external scene with exquisite lucidity, but you see also, instead of a mirror of laborious and almost painful elaboration, as you do in Gray, a tranquillized spirit, which reflects like a clear lake the features of the scene. Take, for example, this picture of a wet and stormy English spring and a soft deep English summer, from the lovely poem "*Thyrsis*," written in commemoration of Mr. Arnold's early friend, Arthur Hugh Clough:—

"So, some tempestuous morn in early June,  
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,

Before the roses and the longest day—  
 When garden walks and all the grassy floor  
 With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May  
 And chestnut flowers are strewn—  
 So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
 From the wet field, through the vext garden trees  
 Come, with the volleying rain and tossing breeze :  
*The bloom is gone and with the bloom go I !*

“ Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go ?  
 Soon will the high Midsummer poms come on,  
 Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,  
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,  
 Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,  
 And stocks in fragrant blow ;  
 Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
 And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
 And groups under the dreaming garden trees,  
 And the full moon and the white evening star.”

It would be impossible to give with greater ease as well as delicacy a true picture of these scenes, and with it the subtle flavour of a real rest of spirit in them. The “volleying” rain, the “tossing” breeze, the “vext” garden trees, and the grass strewn with shed May and chestnut blossoms call up the very life of a squally spring day in England, as do the “high Midsummer poms,” the “roses that down the alleys shine afar,” the “open, jasmine-muffled lattices,” the “groups under the dreaming garden trees,” and the white moon and star, the very life of an English midsummer night ; and yet the whole has a tinge of careful tenderness and peace that tells you of the refreshment of these images to the writer. The “vext gar-

den trees" could have been spoken of as "vext" only by one who had a true delight in their air of tranquillity, just as they could have been described as "dreaming" in the midsummer moonlight only by one who had the deepest feeling for this visionary beauty of contrast between the white light streaming over them and the black shade beneath. Again, "roses that down the alleys shine afar," is a line sufficiently betraying how deeply the fair perspective of an English garden is engraved on the poet's imagination, while the reproaches lavished on the "too quick despaire" for the hasty neglect of so rich a feast of beauty, strikes the key-note to the feeling of the whole. Nor is this passage in any sense a peculiar instance of Mr. Arnold's flowing, lucid, and tender mode of painting Nature. In all his descriptive passages—and they are many and beautiful—it is the same. He is never buoyant and bright indeed, but the scene is always drawn with a gentle ease and grace, suggesting that it springs up in the poet's imagination with as rapid and natural a growth as the strokes which delineate it before your eyes, for he makes no heavy draft upon your imaginative power to follow him; you seem to be sharing with him the very vision which he paints; and as to moral effect, the impressions that these pictures make is something between wistful enjoyment, quiet yearning, and regretful peace; it is always one of rest, but always of a rest that is not fully satisfying—the rest of which the poet himself says, "Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well." And it is characteristic of Mr. Arnold,

that in closing his larger poems, even when they are poems of narrative, he is very fond of ending with a passage of purely naturalistic description which shadows forth something more than it actually paints, and yet leaves the field of suggestion absolutely to the reader's own fancy. Thus, after painting the fatal conflict between Sohrab and Rustum, in which the famous old warrior Rustum gives the death-wound to his own son, in ignorance that he is his son, Mr. Arnold, after giving us the tender farewell of Sohrab to his father when the discovery is made, concludes with this most beautiful passage, in which the accomplished geographer turns his half-scientific, half-poetical pleasure in tracing the course of a great river to the purpose of providing a sort of poetical anodyne for the pain which the tragic ending has, or ought to have, given :—

“ But the majestic river floated on,  
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
 Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,  
 Under the solitary moon ;—he flow'd  
 Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,  
 Brimming and bright, and large ; then sands begin  
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
 And split his currents : that for many a league  
 The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along  
 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—  
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
 In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
 A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last  
 The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide

His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea."

Of course the intention may have been to make the flow of the Oxus, "out of the mist and hum of that low land, into the frosty starlight," and through the "beds of sand and matted rushy isles," which make him a "foiled, circuitous wanderer," till at last his "luminous home of waters opens, bright and tranquil," a sort of parable of the unhappy Rustum's great career and the peace of his passing away; but nothing of this is so much as hinted, and we should rather say that, though the course of a great river may be selected rather than any other scene of natural beauty, for the vague analogy it presents to the chequered life of a great leader, the intention of the poet is simply to refresh his own mind after the spectacle of misspent heroism and clouded destiny, with the image of one of Nature's greater works in which there seems to be the same kind of vicissitude, the same loss of pristine force and grandeur, and yet a recovery of all and more than all the majestic volume and triumphant strength of the earlier period at the end. Mr. Arnold always seems to feel that the proper anodyne for the pain of lacerated hearts is the contemplation of the healing and the peace which are to be found inherent in the vital energies of Nature; but his view never seems to be to use these natural analogies as a vague augury of happier fortunes for his characters than it suits his purpose as a poet to paint, but rather simply to recall that there is a great restorative power

in the life of Nature to which we ought to turn for relief, whenever the spectacle of disease and disorder and distress becomes overpowering. It is in this sense, we suppose, that Mr. Arnold ends the poem on that feeling of hopeless conflict with his age which led Empedocles to plunge into the crater of Etna, by the following exquisite picture of the classical haunt of the Greek Muses :—

“Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,  
Thick breaks the red flame;  
All Etna heaves fiercely  
Her forest-clothed frame.

“Not here, O Apollo!  
Are haunts meet for thee,  
But, where Helicon breaks down  
In cliff to the sea,

“Where the moon-silvered inlets  
Send far their light voice  
Up the still vale of Thisbe,  
O speed, and rejoice!

“On the sward at the cliff-top  
Lie strewn the white flocks;  
On the cliff-side the pigeons  
Roost deep in the rocks.

“In the moonlight the shepherds,  
Soft lulled by the rills,  
Lie wrapt in their blankets,  
Asleep on the hills.

“—What forms are these coming  
So white through the gloom?



What garments out-glistening  
The gold-flowered broom?

“What sweet-breathing presence  
Out-perfumes the thyme?  
What voices enrapture  
The night’s balmy prime?

“’Tis Apollo comes leading  
His choir, the Nine.  
—The leader is fairest,  
But all are divine.

“They are lost in the hollows!  
They stream up again!  
What seeks on this mountain  
The glorified train?—

“They bathe on this mountain,  
In the spring by their road;  
Then on to Olympus,  
Their endless abode!

“Whose praise do they mention?  
Of what is it told?—  
What will be for ever;  
What was from of old.

“First hymn they the Father  
Of all things;—and then,  
The rest of immortals,  
The action of men.

“The day in his hotness,  
The strife with the palm;  
The night in her silence,  
The stars in their calm.”

A more perfect intellectual anodyne for the pain of a sick mind doubting if its own true life could be harmonized with the life of the great universe, it would be difficult to conceive; it solves no problem, it lifts no veil, but it sings of perfect beauty, human effort, and celestial rest, as if they could really be harmonized in the same bright vision, and so hushes for a moment the tumultuous pulses of the heart. And this is Mr. Arnold's habitual use of Nature. He loves to steep his poems in the colours of the great mountain landscapes, or the cool mountain pastures, or the starlit summer sea; but it is as a febrifuge from restlessness and doubt, a draught in which he can find not joy but relief, not peace but a sad serenity. Let us give one final instance in the poem called "A Summer's Night," where, after depicting the exhausting duties assigned by the world to the world's labourers, and the disastrous wreck which falls upon those who break away from the world's fetters, he concludes in a strain somewhat more explicit than usual, by affirming that in the great world of Nature there is something, which, though it cannot indeed satisfy the heart, still can teach us fortitude, and instil into the soul a few drops of stoic grandeur:—

"Is there no life, but these alone?  
 Madman or slave, must man be one?  
 Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!  
 Clearness divine!  
 Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign  
 Of languor, though so calm, and though so great,  
 Are yet untroubled and unpassionate!

Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,  
And, though so task'd, keep free from dust and soil!  
I will not say that your mild deeps retain  
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain  
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain;  
But I will rather say that you remain  
A world above man's head to let him see  
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,  
How vast, yet of what clear transparency!  
How it were good to live there, and breathe free!  
How fair a lot to fill  
Is left to each man still!"

We have now sketched slightly the two main strands in Mr. Arnold's poetry, and are in a position to consider better his specific power of poetic expression and the degree of success and failure shown in the more striking of his individual poems.\* His power of poetic expression is founded on a delicate simplicity of taste—such a simplicity as we might fairly expect from the student of Goethe and Wordsworth; from one, moreover, who shows the finest appreciation of Greek poetry, and who has a highly cultivated appreciation both for the specific aroma of words and for the drift of thoughts. Simplicity is the characteristic fruit of all these studies and tastes, and perhaps Mr. Arnold's bitterest reproach against this modern world of "change, alarm, surprise" is the medley of unblest emotions, and turbid, obscure feelings which it thrusts upon us, leaving us hardly a single moment of real lucidity to "possess our souls" before we die. Hence his own poetic style is remarkable for its scholarlike delicacy and genuine simplicity of touch (we

doubt if one awkward or turgid word is to be found in his poems); and if his ear for rhythm is not equal to his insight into the expressive power of words, it is generally only in the poems of *recitative* that this fault is observable. He has not caught from his fine studies of Homer the exquisite music of the Homeric wave of rhythm; but he has caught his clearness of atmosphere, what he himself has so finely termed "the pure lines of an Ionian horizon, the liquid clearness of an Ionian sky." So much as we have yet said of Mr. Arnold's power of expression has relation only to form—to all which is implied in delicacy of discernment of the force of language, and preference for simplicity of subject in what he treats. But the special direction in which Mr. Arnold's power of poetic expression is chiefly shown is, as what we have said of the burden of his lyrical poems will of course imply, that of sedate and half intellectual emotions, especially those which turn towards Nature with tender and melancholy yearning. Now it is this purity and simplicity of taste which gives to Mr. Arnold's style an open-air freshness and glow, affording a delightful variety to that element of sedate majesty which we have noted in him. Take, for instance, the beautiful song, already quoted, in which Callicles describes the haunt of the Muses, and notice how limpid and fresh is the English as well as the thought, and yet how sedate and stately the general effect. We will repeat only the two lovely verses:—

"What forms are these coming  
So white through the gloom?"

What garments out-glistening  
The gold-flowered broom?

“What sweet-breathing presence  
Out-perfumes the thyme?  
What voices enrapture  
The night’s balmy prime?”

Observe here the exquisitely classical English idiom “out-glistening” and “out-perfume,” which conveys with so much simplicity, precision, and grace the rivalry between the charms of the Muses and of Nature, and the surpassingness of the former. Again, the use of the word “enrapture,” for the joy which the divine voices diffuse through the moon-lit air, is a stroke of genius in itself, so happily does it convey the identification of the singer with the scene, and with so much simple stateliness of effect. Or take this lovely picture of Thames scenery near Oxford in “The Scholar Gipsy,”—a picture that is the perfect embodiment of “sweetness and light:”—

“For most, I know, thou lov’st retired ground!  
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,  
Returning home on summer nights, have met  
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,  
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,  
As the punt’s rope chops round;  
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,  
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers  
Pluck’d in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,  
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream!”

It would be impossible to express the tenderness of feeling which scenery long loved and studied excites

in the heart—not by its mere beauty, but by its associations also—with more perfect simplicity, and yet not without grandeur of movement and dignity of feeling. The latter effect is gained partly by the cadence of the verse, which in this poem is always perfectly musical and sedate, and partly by the character of the expression, namely, by a tinge of gentle condescension (as, for instance, in the expression “the stripling Thames”), and the careful benignity of the whole detail. The simplicity is gained partly by the perfectly poetical and yet technical naturalness of the line—“As the punt’s rope chops round,” which is poetical, because it brings the peculiar motion so vividly before you; partly by the happy tenderness of the line—“Fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers,” to convey the conscious pleasure of both tending and touching them; but mostly by the perfect ease of the flow of the language, and the bright lucidity of the verse. But Mr. Arnold hardly exercises the full magic of his characteristic power of poetical expression until he is in the mood in which some sad, though calm, emotion is the predominant thread of his thought, and natural beauty only the auxiliary to it; till he is in the mood in which, if his heart flies to his eyes, it is only to find some illustration for the enigmas pent up within it, some new image for the incommunicability of human joy and grief, for the pain which results from the division of the soul against itself, for the restlessness which yearns inconsistently for sympathy and for solitude, and rebounds like a shuttlecock from the one desire to the other. No line, for instance, in the whole

range of English poetry is fuller of depth of expression than that which closes one of the poems to Marguerite, the poem which begins with the sad cry—

“Yes! in the sea of life enisled,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless, watery wild,  
We mortal millions live *alone*.”

--where Mr. Arnold ends his melancholy reverie by confessing that it was God's will which decreed this strange isolation,

“And bade betwixt their shores to be  
*The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.*”

That last line is inexhaustible in beauty and force. Without any false emphasis or prolix dwelling on the matter, it shadows out to you the plunging deep-sea lead and the eerie cry of “no soundings,” recalls that saltiness of the sea which takes from water every refreshing association, every quality that helps to slake thirst or supply sap, and then concentrates all these dividing attributes, which strike a sort of lonely terror into the soul, into the one word “estranging.” It is a line full of intensity, simplicity, and grandeur—a line to possess and haunt the imagination. And the same exceptional force of expression comes out not unfrequently under the shadow of similar emotions.

Nothing, for instance, can have more force of its peculiar kind than the description of the blended delight in Nature and disappointment in Man felt by the French recluse, the author of “Obermann,” who

fled from the world he disdained to brood over its  
maladies in French woods and Swiss huts,

“In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,  
Or châlets near the Alpine snow.”

There is a mixed simplicity and exaltation of feeling in the following lines, which few English poets have surpassed :—

“I turn thy leaves! I feel thy breath  
Once more upon me roll;  
That air of languor, cold, and death,  
Which brooded o’er thy soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

“A fever in these pages burns  
Beneath the calm they feign;  
A wounded human spirit turns,  
Here, on its bed of pain.

“Yes, though the virgin mountain air  
Fresh through these pages blows,  
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare  
The soul of their mute snows;

“Though here a mountain-murmur swells  
Of many a dark-bough’d pine,  
Though, as you read, you hear the bells  
Of the high-pasturing kine—

“Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,  
And brooding mountain-bee,  
There sobs I know not what ground tone  
Of human agony!”

Nor is the opening of this poem at all more characteristic of the special power of its author than its close. There is indeed something, more almost



of *peroration* than of the last swell of a lyric emotion, in the poet's adieu to the hero of his reverie :—

“ Farewell ! Under the sky we part,  
In this stern Alpine dell.  
O unstrung will ! O broken heart,  
A last, a last farewell ! ”

And that leads us to remark how very near poetry of this order—the predominant emotion of which, however sad, is always sedate and stately in its movement—often approaches to the nobler rhetoric,—of which grandeur of total effect, with simplicity of elementary structure, are the main conditions. The object of the verse we have just quoted seems to be almost as nearly one of persuasion, *i.e.*, oratorical, as one of expression, *i.e.*, poetical. It reads more like an indirect but conscious effort to subdue the reader's mind into a mood of compassionate admiration for the author of “*Obermann*,” than a mere utterance of the poet's own feeling ;—it is more eloquent than pathetic. And where, as often happens in other poems—in the very fine continuation of this same poem, for instance—Mr. Arnold's thread of sentiment is much more directly didactic than it is here (and this is especially the case in the pieces of unrhymed *recitative*, where the leading idea is usually a train of thought rather than feeling, and very frequently a train of very directly hortative, on argumentative thought), the rhetorical often predominates greatly over the poetical vein, and seems to court direct comparison rather with the effusions of the improvisatore than

with those of the singer. In such pieces the verse fails—when it does fail,—as the inspiration of the improvisatore fails, more from a subsidence of the initial impulse, than from artistic exhaustion of the theme, or inadequate command of language to work out fully the conception of the imagination. Take, for instance, among the rhymed pieces, the eloquent indictment brought against Death, as if it involved a sort of breach of faith with the instinctive youthful hope for some fulness of earthly rapture, in the piece called “Youth and Calm.” No one can read it without noticing the regularly mounting steps of an impassioned *speech*, rather than the imperceptibly graduated concentration of feeling, natural to a lyrical poem:—

“’Tis death! and peace, indeed, is here,  
 And ease from shame, and rest from fear.  
 There’s nothing can disarm now  
 The smoothness of that limpid brow.  
 But is a calm like this, in truth,  
 The crowning end of life and youth,  
 And when this boon rewards the dead,  
 Are all debts paid, has all been said?  
 And is the heart of youth so light,  
 Its step so firm, its eye so bright,  
 Because on its hot brow there blows  
 A wind of promise and repose  
 From the far grave, to which it goes;  
 Because it has the hope to come,  
 One day, to harbour in the tomb?  
 Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one  
 For daylight, for the cheerful sun,  
 For feeling nerves and living breath—  
 Youth dreams a bliss on this side death!

It dreams a rest, if not more deep,  
 More grateful than this marble sleep;  
 It hears a voice within it tell :  
*Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well !*  
 'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,  
 But 'tis not what our youth desires."

Only here, what *should* be the peroration is an anti-climax. The best illustrations, however, of the rhetorical cast of a good deal of Mr. Arnold's poetry are to be found in the *recitatives* which find so much favour in his sight, but which in the perfect simplicity and lucidity of structure of his rhymed poems are sometimes—not always—remarkably deficient. The music of rhymed verse always seems to bind him down to the simpler ranges of human experience. He does not resemble Shelley, who, like his own skylark, seems to sing most sweetly as he rises into the rarefied air of abstract essences. On the contrary, Mr. Arnold is always awakened to homelier feelings by the melody of verse, and is never so lucid and concrete as when he has to meet the exigencies of a complex stanza such as he uses in the "Scholar-Gipsy," and "Thyrsis." The little speech which we have just quoted on the contrast between the youthful hopes of earthly bliss and the sad calm of early death is rhetorical in structure, but it is the pathetic rhetoric of a troubled heart, descanting on the experience of almost every home. When, however, Mr. Arnold chooses the unrhymed dactylic or anapæstic metres for his oratory, though he is often extremely eloquent, and sometimes even rich in pictorial effect, he is apt to be cold and grandiose, and now and then even to be obscure—a sin of

which he is rarely indeed guilty. The contrast may be best seen, though it would be impossible with the space at our command to illustrate it, in the comparison between the second poem addressed to the author of "*Obermann*" ("*Obermann Once More*," vol. ii. p. 239), and the poem which follows it, and closes the volumes, called "*The Future*." They are on kindred subjects, the first tracing the signs of the immediate future of modern religion; the second, the relation generally of the tendencies of the Future to those of the Past. The Pantheistic vein of thought and sentiment pervades both poems alike,—and it is one which, as we need hardly say, runs counter to our deepest convictions,—but there is a vast difference between the two as poems. The former is full of human yearning and pathos, of definite picture, and clear imagery; the latter is a dim vapour of eloquent dissertation, in which, indeed, there are vaguely seen some of the bright tints of the rainbow, but there is no warmth and no clearness; it is grandiose without grandeur, nebulous without mystery. Within our limits we do not know that we can give a finer specimen at once of the frequently high oratory of these choric outbursts of Mr. Arnold's didactic genius, and also of the frequent tendency in them to overpass the impulse which gave them birth, than in the deservedly celebrated lines at Heine's grave, in which Mr. Arnold passes from criticism of the bitter German poet to a grand image for this Philistine nation of ours—its blindness and its strength; but unfortunately does not stop there, falling into bathos as he proceeds:—

“I chide thee not, that thy sharp  
Upbraidings often assail’d  
England, my country; for we,  
Troublous and sad, for her sons,  
Long since, deep in our hearts,  
Echo the blame of her foes.  
We, too, sigh that she flags!  
We, too, say that she now,  
Scarce comprehending the voice  
Of her greatest, golden-mouth’d sons  
Of a former age any more,  
Stupidly travels her round  
Of mechanic business, and lets  
Slow die out of her life  
Glory, and genius, and joy!

“So thou arraign’st her, her foe.  
So we arraign her, her sons.

“Yes, we arraign her! but she,  
The weary Titan! with deaf  
Ears, and labour-dimm’d eyes,  
Regarding neither to right  
Nor left, goes passively by,  
Staggering on to her goal;  
Bearing on shoulders immense,  
Atlanteân, the load,  
Well-nigh not to be borne,  
Of the too vast orb of her fate.

“But was it thou—I think  
Surely it was—that bard  
Unnamed, who, Goethe said,  
*Had every other gift, but wanted love;*  
Love, without which the tongue  
Even of angels sounds amiss?

" Charm is the glory which makes  
 Song of the poet divine ;  
 Love is the fountain of charm !  
 How without charm wilt thou draw,  
 Poet ! the world to thy way ?  
 Not by the lightnings of wit !  
 Not by the thunder of scorn !  
 These to the world, too, are given ;  
 Wit it possesses, and scorn—  
 Charm is the poet's alone.  
*Hollow and dull are the great,*  
*And artists envious, and the mob profane.*  
 We know all this, we know !  
 Cam'st thou from heaven, O child  
 Of light ! but this to declare ?  
 Alas ! to help us forget  
 Such barren knowledge awhile,  
 God gave the poet his song."

It would be hard to find a higher piece of pure pictorial oratory than that description of England ;—as regards style, Mr. Bright, if he held with Mr. Arnold, which of course he does not, might almost have delivered it in one of his greater speeches ;—and hard, too, to find a bathos deeper than the flat, harsh, somewhat stilted prose, not even rhythmical, though it is printed in metre, which immediately follows, especially the lines which Mr. Arnold italicizes in his last two stanzas. The same may be said of almost all his *recitative* pieces. They contain fragments of high oratory, but they are coldly intellectual, and tend to a grandiosity from which the fall to flat prose is not difficult.

And it is indeed Mr. Arnold's chief defect as a

poet and artist that the themes which interest him most are seldom living and organic wholes, but are rather trains of thought sufficiently fascinating to the imagination and the feelings, but without definite form and organization; in fact, subjects which necessarily lend themselves more easily to the irregular rhythmic improvisations to which we have just referred, than to more perfect forms of verse. Even when he adopts these more perfect forms, it is rather for the sake of the pathos of elegiac moods than for the completeness they give to the framework of an artistic whole. Of all his so-called narrative poems, most of which are, indeed, usually reflective rather than narrative, the "Sick King in Bokhara" is the only one that strikes us as reaching anything like the higher levels of Mr. Arnold's force. "Sohrab and Rustum," polished and elegant as it is, is tame beyond anything that the story can account for. The long Homeric similes are often extremely beautiful, the subject itself is genuinely tragic, the style is classical; there is nothing to account for its tameness except the tameness itself. It is evident that the author felt no throbs of heart as he brought the gallant son into the fatal conflict with the gallant father. He looked on it with the polished interest of an Oxford scholar in an episode of Oriental tradition, but without the slightest touch of that animated sympathy and vivid suspense which Scott would have thrown into such a theme. It is not till we get to the beautiful description of the northward course of the Oxus, when Rustum is left with the corpse of his son lying beside him on the plain, enveloped in mid-

night and despair, that we feel the true charm of the poet, and then the story is over. "Balder Dead" has to our ears even less interest than "Sohrab and Rustum." "Tristram and Iseult" is a great advance on either, and is unquestionably a very fine fragment; but it has little title to the name of a narrative poem at all. Mr. Arnold borrows the Arthurian legend only to give a beautiful picture of the shipwreck of unhappy passions in a double form, in the feverish and restless delirium of the dying knight, and in the hollow disappointed youth of Iseult of Brittany after she has survived her husband and her grander rival. Iseult of Ireland is hardly painted, except in face and form; she only kneels beside her lover's death-bed to die with him, and lend her outward image to the poet's picture. But it would be hard to speak too highly of the exquisite and lucid painting of the scene of Tristram's death in the Breton castle, beneath those "ghostlike tapestries" on which are figured the green huntsman, with his bugle and hounds, so dear to the sylvan knight in lifetime, with the Irish queen kneeling, also dead, at his bedside, both of them—

"Cold, cold as those who lived and loved  
A thousand years ago;"

or of Iseult of Brittany and of the white hands, in the subsequent part, living, after her husband's and rival's deaths, the joyless life of one who had sought, but found not, the happiness of love, and who survives in the happiness of her children as in a kind of moonlit dream :—



“ Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will—  
Is it this thought that makes her mien so still,  
Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet,  
So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet  
Her children’s? She moves slow; her voice alone  
Hath yet an infantine and silver tone,  
But even that comes languidly; in truth,  
She seems one dying in a mask of youth.”

No picture could be sweeter or fairer. Mr. Arnold has a special gift for the delineation of these moods of passionless pain—of still, moonlit craving that is never hot and never satisfied. But the beauty of the poem certainly does not lie in the strength of its narrative, but in its exquisite delineation of the feelings of death-chilled passion and of joyless calm. The “*Forsaken Merman*”—a very delicate little poem of its kind—is again hardly in any sense a narrative poem. It is a pretty fanciful song full of picture, of which the living pulse is the innocent childish heart-longing of a bewildered, instinctive, unmasterful love conscious of the existence of a rivalry in the claims of religious feelings into which it cannot enter, and yet full of painful yearning. This is always the type of feeling which Mr. Arnold paints most finely. But far higher are the pretensions of the “*Sick King in Bokhara*.” Slight as the subject is, the poem is full of life, and paints not merely a few exquisite pictures and a new phase of that painful calm or placid suffering in which Mr. Arnold so much excels, but the richness and stateliness, and also the prostration and fatalism, of Oriental life; and it is especially happy in portraying vividly the concrete simplicities of Eastern imagery

when expressing desire and regret. The grave, business-like local colour of the opening is in itself full of promise :—

*Hussein.*—

“O most just Vizier, send away  
The cloth-merchants, and let them be,  
Them and their dues, this day! the King  
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.”

*The Vizier.*—

“Oh merchants, tarry yet a day  
Here in Bokhara! but at noon  
To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay  
Each fortieth web of cloth to me,  
As the law is, and go your way.”

And then the story of the poor man who in the intensity of his thirst, during the long drought, had secreted a pitcher of water for his own use, and when he found it drained, had cursed those who drained it, his own mother amongst them, and who, in his remorse, called upon the king to give judgment upon him that he might be stoned and expiate his sin as the law demanded, and the delineation of the king's extreme reluctance, are given with the most genuine force and simplicity. The king's great desire to spare the man, and the orders given for that purpose, of which it is pithily said—

“As the king said, so was it done,”

—the man's indignation at this hesitation to judge and punish him,—the king's loth consent at last, and the fanatical joy of the victim, are painted with some-

thing like the grand simplicity of the Hebrew Scriptures:—

“Now the King charged us secretly:  
‘Stoned must he be; the law stands so.  
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way!  
Hinder him not, but let him go.’

“So saying, the King took a stone,  
And cast it softly;—but the man,  
With a great joy upon his face,  
Kneel’d down, and cried not, neither ran.”

And perhaps the most dramatic thing in the whole range of Mr. Arnold’s poems is the scornful reproof administered by the old Vizier when he has heard the story, to the king’s weakness and softness of heart:—

*The Vizier.*—

“O King, in this I praise thee not!  
Now must I call thy grief not wise.  
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,  
To find such favour in thine eyes?

“Nay, were he thine own mother’s son,  
Still thou art king, and the law stands.  
It were not meet the balance swerved,  
The sword were broken in thy hands.

“But being nothing, as he is,  
Why for no cause make sad thy face?—  
Lo, I am old! three kings, ere thee,  
Have I seen reigning in this place.

“But who, through all this length of time,  
Could bear the burden of his years,  
If he for strangers pain’d his heart  
Not less than those who merit tears?

"Fathers we *must* have, wife and child,  
And grievous is the grief for these;  
This pain alone which *must* be borne,  
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

"But other loads than this his own  
One man is not well made to bear.  
Besides, to each are his own friends,  
To mourn with him and show him care.

"Look, this is but one single place,  
Though it be great; all the earth round,  
If a man bear to have it so,  
Things which might vex him shall be found.

"Upon the Russian frontier, where  
The watchers of two armies stand  
Near one another, many a man,  
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

"Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave;  
They snatch also, towards Mervè,  
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,  
And up from thence to Orgunjè.

"And these all, labouring for a lord,  
Eat not the fruit of their own hands;  
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,  
To that man's mind, who understands.

"The kaffirs also (whom God curse!)  
Vex one another, night and day;  
There are the lepers, and all sick;  
There are the poor, who faint away.

"All these have sorrow, and keep still,  
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.  
Wilt thou have pity on all these?  
No, nor on this dead dog, O King!"

Mr. Arnold has never achieved anything so truly dramatic as this poem. The reasoning, never in the abstract, but always by examples which run through it, the profound abasement of mind before the demands of the admitted conditions of social existence, the utter acquiescence of the sage old minister's intellect in the order of things as he knows it, the wonder and distress of the young king that his own urgent desire is of so little account when he would alleviate the lot of one human being whom he pities, and the kicking of his nature against the pricks of the iron circle which limits his royal power, are all painted with a brightness and care which would almost argue a special Oriental culture, though we do not suppose that Mr. Arnold has had any specially great opportunities in that direction. Of the poems which are called narrative, this is in our opinion the only one, rightly so called, that is perfectly successful. And perhaps its perfect success is due to the curious correspondence between the elements of the story and the peculiar tendencies already noticed in Mr. Arnold's genius. The stately egotism of manner, which has here full swing and a great field, the dignified remorse which breeds so resolute a spirit of expiation in the sinner's mind, the sedate dignities of the king's helplessness, the contemptuous criticism of the Grand Vizier on the unreasonable excess of his master's sympathy with one who had no natural claims on him, and the extreme simplicity of the whole action, all seem to fit the subject specially for Mr. Arnold's treatment. At all events, as to the brilliant clearness and rich colour-

ing of the completed whole, there can be no two opinions. It seems to us nearly the only case in which Mr. Arnold has chosen a subject distinct and perfect in its parts, and complete as a whole—a subject of which you cannot say that he brought it to a conclusion chiefly because it must end somewhere, and he had exhausted his own interest in it. This piece is the one exception to the rule that Mr. Arnold's best poems are not artistic wholes, which come to a necessary and natural end because their structure is organically perfect, but rather fragments of imaginative reverie, which begin where the poet begins to meditate, and end when he has done.

It must not be supposed, however, that we regard the art of those of Mr. Arnold's poems which are expressly elegiac and lyrical, as generally poor. On the contrary, as it is of the essence of pieces of this kind to reflect absolutely the mood of the poet, to begin where he begins and end where he ends,—the only artistic demand which can possibly be applicable to the *structure* of such pieces, is that it shall show you the growth and subsidence of a vein of thought and emotion, and make no abrupt demands on the sympathy of the reader. This, at all events in almost all his rhymed pieces of a lyrical and elegiac nature, Mr. Arnold effects with the greatest delicacy and modulation of feeling; in the others he is not unfrequently stranded on bare prose, and compelled to leap back with a very jerky movement into the tide of his emotion. But from his highest moods of reverie he subsides, by the help of some beautiful picture of scenery

in harmony with the emotions he is delineating ;—as in the lovely Alpine sketches of his “Obermann,” or with some graceful episode of illustration, like the beautiful comparison between the wandering Scholar-Gipsy’s dread of the contagion of our hesitating half-love of Nature, which hugs the shore of artificial civilization, and the old Tyrian skipper’s wrath against the Greek coaster, who troubled his realm by timid competition, and yet never dared to launch out into the shoreless ocean. No art can be more perfect than that with which Mr. Arnold closes the finer of his lyrical and elegiac poems—poems, however, of which it is the very essence to reflect his own reveries, not to paint any continuous whole.

When we come to ask what Mr. Arnold’s poetry has done for this generation, the answer must be that no one has expressed more powerfully and poetically its spiritual weaknesses, its craving for a passion that it cannot feel, its admiration for a self-mastery that it cannot achieve, its desire for a creed that it fails to accept, its sympathy with a faith that it will not share, its aspiration for a peace that it does not know. But Mr. Arnold does all this from the intellectual side,—sincerely and delicately, but from the surface, and never from the centre. It is the same with his criticisms. They are fine, they are keen, they are often true, but they are always too much limited to the thin superficial layer of the moral nature of their subjects, and seem to take little comparative interest in the deeper individuality beneath. Read his essay on Heine, and you will see the critic engrossed with the

relation of Heine to the political and social ideas of his day, and passing over with comparative indifference the true soul of Heine, the fountain both of his poetry and his cynicism. Read his fine lectures on translating Homer, and observe how exclusively the critic's mind is occupied with the form, as distinguished from the substance of the Homeric poetry. Even when he concerns himself with the greatest modern poets, with Shakespeare (as in the preface to the earlier edition of his poems), or with Goethe in reiterated poetical criticisms, or when he, again and again in his poems, treats of Wordsworth, it is always the style and superficial doctrine of their poetry, not the individual character and unique genius which occupy him. He will tell you whether a poet is "sane and clear," or stormy and fervent; whether he is "rapid" and "noble," or loquacious and quaint; whether a thinker penetrates the husks of conventional thought which mislead the crowd; whether there is sweetness as well as lucidity in his aims; whether a descriptive writer has "distinction" of style, or is admirable only for his vivacity; but he rarely goes to the individual heart of any of the subjects of his criticism;—he finds their style and class, but not their personality in that class; he *ranks* his men, but does not portray them; hardly even seems to find much interest in the *individual* roots of their character. And so, too, with his main poetical theme,—the spiritual weakness and languor and self disdain of the age. He paints these characteristics in language which makes his poems a sort of natural voice for the expe-



rience of his contemporaries, a voice without which their intellectual life would be even more obscure and confused than it is; but still with a certain intellectual superficiality of touch which suggests the sympathetic observer rather than the wakeful sufferer, and which leaves an unfathomed depth beneath the layer of perturbed consciousness with which he deals—that is, beneath that plane wherein the spheres of the intellect and the soul intersect, of which he has so carefully studied the currents and the tides. The sign of this limitation, of this exclusion, of this externality of touch, is the tinge of conscious intellectual majesty rearing its head above the storm with the “*Quos ego*” of Virgil’s god, that never forsakes these poems of Mr. Arnold’s even when their “lyrical cry” is most pathetic. It is this which identifies him with the sceptics, which renders his poems, pathetic as they often are, no adequate expression of the passionate craving of the soul for faith. There is always a tincture of pride in his confessed inability to believe—a self-congratulation that he is too clear-eyed to yield to the temptations of the heart. He asks with compassionate imperiousness for demonstration rather than conviction; conviction he will not take without demonstration. The true *humility* of the yearning for faith is far from Mr. Arnold’s conception. The Poet Laureate’s picture of himself, as—

—“Falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the world’s great altar stairs  
That slope through darkness up to God,”

is a great contrast to Mr. Arnold’s grand air of tearful

Virgilian regret as he gazes on the pale ascetic faces of the Carthusian monks, and delivers himself thus:—

“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride;  
I come to shed them at their side.”

His vision of Christ and Christianity, even, is wholly taken from the same standing-point of genuine but condescending sympathy. He can see how much greater the Christian Church was than the Roman world it subdued; but to him it is greater not through the truth of its belief, but through that vast capacity of belief which enabled it to accept what was not true,—in short, to feign a truth higher than the naked facts. No passage in Mr. Arnold's poems is perhaps so grand as the one which delineates this contrast, with its majestic though false and desolate assumption that it was the mighty *dreaming* power of the East, the power to create the objects of its own belief, which conquered the hard organization of the West; and as no passage is so characteristic of Mr. Arnold's whole relation to the thought of his day, with it, though it is somewhat long, we will close our too voluminous extracts from his stately and fascinating poems:—

“Wellnigh two thousand years have brought  
Their load, and gone away,  
Since last on earth there lived and wrought  
A world like ours to-day.

“ Like ours it look’d in outward air ;  
But of that inward prize,  
*Soul*, that we take more count and care,  
Ah ! there our future lies.<sup>1</sup>

“ Like ours it look’d in outward air !—  
Its head was clear and true,  
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,  
No pause its action knew ;

“ Stout was its arm, each thew and bone  
Seem’d puissant and alive—  
But, ah ! its heart, its heart was stone,  
And so it could not thrive.

“ On that hard Pagan world disgust  
And secret loathing fell ;  
Deep weariness and sated lust  
Made human life a hell.

“ In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,  
The Roman noble lay ;  
He drove abroad, in furious guise,  
Along the Appian way ;

“ He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,  
And crown’d his hair with flowers—  
No easier nor no quicker pass’d  
The impracticable hours.

“ The brooding East with awe beheld  
Her impious younger world.  
The Roman tempest swell’d and swell’d,  
And on her head was hurl’d.

<sup>1</sup> This flat and unfortunate verse, as it seems to us, has been inserted by Mr. Arnold in his second edition to make his doctrine of the religion of the future seem more hopeful. It is a prosaic doctrinal graft on which we cannot compliment him.

“The East bow’d low before the blast  
 In patient, deep disdain;  
 She let the legions thunder past,  
 And plunged in thought again.

“So well she mused, a morning broke  
 Across her spirit grey.  
 A conquering, new born joy awoke,  
 And filled her life with day.

“‘Poor world,’ she cried, ‘so deep accurst!  
 That runn’st from pole to pole  
 To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—  
 Go, seek it in thy soul!’

“She heard it, the victorious West,  
 In crown and sword array’d!  
 She felt the void which mined her breast,  
 She shiver’d and obey’d.

“She veil’d her eagles, snapp’d her sword,  
 And laid her sceptre down;  
 Her stately purple she abhorr’d,  
 And her imperial crown;

“She broke her flutes, she stopp’d her sports,  
 Her artists could not please;  
 She tore her books, she shut her courts,  
 She fled her palaces.

“Lust of the eye and pride of life,  
 She left it all behind—  
 And hurried, torn with inward strife,  
 The wilderness to find.

“Tears wash’d the trouble from her face!  
 She changed into a child!  
 ’Mid weeds and wrecks she stood—a place  
 Of ruin—but she smiled!

- “ Oh, had I lived in that great day,  
How had its glory new  
Fill'd earth and heaven, and caught away  
My ravish'd spirit too !
- “ No cloister-floor of humid stone  
Had been too cold for me ;  
For me no Eastern desert lone  
Had been too far to flee.
- “ No thoughts that to the world belong  
Had stood against the wave  
Of love which set so deep and strong  
From Christ's then open grave.
- “ No lonely life had pass'd too slow  
When I could hourly see  
That wan, nail'd Form, with head droop'd low,  
Upon the bitter tree ;
- “ Could see the Mother with the Child  
Whose tender winning arts  
Have to his little arms beguiled  
So many wounded hearts !
- “ And centuries came, and ran their course,  
And unspent all that time  
Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,  
And still was at its prime.
- “ Ay, ages long endured his span  
Of life, 'tis true received,  
That gracious Child, that thorn-crown'd Man !  
He lived while we believed.
- “ While we believed, on earth he went,  
And open stood his grave ;

Men call'd from chamber, church, and tent,  
And Christ was by to save.

"Now he is dead ! Far hence he lies  
In the lorn Syrian town,  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down.

"In vain men still, with hoping new,  
Regard his death-place dumb,  
And say the stone is not yet to,  
And wait for words to come.

"Ah, from that silent sacred land,  
Of sun, and arid stone,  
And crumbling wall, and sultry sand,  
Comes now one word alone !

"From David's lips this word did roll,  
'Tis true and living yet ;  
*No man can save his brother's soul,*  
*Nor pay his brother's debt.*

"Alone, self-poised, henceforward man  
Must labour ! must resign  
His all too human creeds, and scan  
Simply the way divine."

It would be impossible to paint more grandly the hard pageantry of Roman civilization, or more imaginatively the apparently magic victory of the brooding mystic over the armed conqueror. But when Mr. Arnold paints the "patient deep *disdain*" of the East for physical might as the power by which it won its miraculous victory, he is inverting strangely the testi-

mony of history, indeed he is reading his own lofty intellectualism back into the past. The East has always been accused of bowing with even too deep a prostration of soul before the omnipotent fiat of the Almighty. It was the Eastern delight in that semi-fatalism which gave Mahommed his strange spell over the Eastern imagination; nay, it was the same fascinated submission to the finger of sheer Power which is occasionally so intensely expressed even in the Hebrew prophets as to read to Christian ears as if God were above righteousness, and as if responsibility could be merged in obedience. If there were any disdain in the Eastern feeling towards the armies of Rome, it was not disdain for the Roman power but for the Roman weakness—that inaccessibility of the West to whispers of the soul which seemed to the Eastern mystic the oracles of a power far greater than the Roman, and of one before which the Roman would be broken in pieces. In other words, what the East disdained in Rome was its want of *listening* power, not its want of dreaming power, of which the Oriental world always knew too well the relaxing and enervating influence. It was too much dreaming which had brought it into subjection to Rome, and further dreaming would only make that subjection more abject. Had Christ, or rather his ideal image, “received,” as Mr. Arnold here says, from the enthusiastic reverie of the East, the gift of a spiritual ascendancy which there was no real Christ to exercise, the peculiar strength of the East must have been precisely identical with its peculiar weakness, namely, its faculty for believing

that to be due to a living Power, outside the mind, which was in truth only the unreal image of the mind itself. The power which could break to pieces hosts of legions was not in the dreamer but in him who awakened the dreamer and dispelled the dream. And it was not "disdain" but "humility" by which the East learned to thrill to the authority of this imperious whisper of the soul—this "foolishness" of faith.

And for us, too, it is not disdain but humility which can help us to recover the loss which Mr. Arnold so pathetically bewails, but which his poetry implicitly expresses also a deep reluctance to supply. The old paradox is as true to-day as it was when St. Paul proclaimed that the weak things of the world should confound the mighty, and the things which were not, should bring to nought the things which were. Perhaps we may paraphrase the same truth in relation to Mr. Arnold's many beautiful expressions of the impotence of the intellect to believe, by saying that he never reaches down to the sources of faith, simply because that final act of humility and trust in which faith arises, is always *individual*, and therefore to him an act of foolishness. Faith is not susceptible of intellectual generalization, being indeed a living act of the individual soul, which must surrender itself to God in a spiritual plane far deeper than that where the dialogue with Doubt which Mr. Arnold so leisurely dramatizes, takes place. Like his own favourite Alpine peak, like

"Jaman! delicately tall  
Above his sun-warm'd firs,"



Mr. Arnold's poetry towers above the warmth of the faiths it analyzes and rejects, and gains thereby its air of mingled pride and sadness. However, his poetry is no more the worse, as poetry, for its false spiritual assumptions than Drama is the worse, as drama, for delineating men as they seem to each other to be, and not as they really are to the eye of God. And as the poet of the soul's melancholy hauteur and plaintive benignity, as the exponent of pity for the great excess of her wants beyond her gifts and graces, as the singer at once of the spirit's hunger, of the insufficiency of the food which the intellect provides for her cravings, and yet also of her fastidious rejection of more celestial nutriment, Mr. Arnold will be read and remembered by every generation in which faith continues to be daunted by reason, and reason to seek, not without pangs of inexplicable compunction, to call in question the transcendental certainties of faith ; in a word he will be read and remembered, as we said in our opening sentence, as the poet who, more than any other of his day, has embodied in his verse "the sweetness, the gravity, the strength, the beauty, and the languor of death."

THE END.





Donk

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